

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per Year. Copyright, 1909, by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

No. 364.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8, 1909.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST • TRAPPING THE HORSE THIEVES, OR, ARIETTA'S QUICK WORK.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



The villains were galloping along with the stolen horses, Arietta tied securely to the leader, when a yell sounded from the right. Then out of the sage brush came Young Wild West and his partners. "Halt!" cried the dashing young deadshot.

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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1909, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

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Young Wild West Trapping the Horse Thieves

OR,

Arietta's Quick Work

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE SEVEN RUFFIANS.

Young Wild West and his friends came to a halt on the bank of the Rio Pecos River, near the close of a very warm day in autumn, a few years ago, after a rather tiresome day's ride.

His two Chinamen, Hop Wah and Wing Wah, at once proceeded to unload the two pack-horses, while our hero and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, saw to the horses.

The girls of the party, who consisted of Arietta Murdock, the golden-haired sweetheart of dashing Young Wild West; Eloise Gardner, Jim Dart's sweetheart, and Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, hastened to lend the Chinamen assistance, for they always took part in putting up the tents.

To the readers of "Wild West Weekly" the characters of our story are too familiar to be described, but for the benefit of those who might read our well-known publication for the first time, we will state that Young Wild West was, without a doubt, the best known boy hero the Wild West has ever produced.

Though but a boy in years, he had made a name for himself that many a man old enough to be his grandfather would have been proud to possess.

This was all through his courage, daring and coolness, and his desire to ever do right, no matter what the cost.

Wild, as he was called by his friends and acquaintances, had won the title of Champion Deadshot of the West when he was scarcely sixteen, and he had held it against all comers since that time.

In his many daring exploits against outlaws and hostile Indians, he had done so much good that he had been presented with a set of resolutions from the United States

Army, and, boy that he was, he held the distinguished position of an army scout to serve at his own discretion.

Having struck it rich in the Black Hills two or three years before the opening of this story, he had ample means to pursue his favorite vocation, which was riding about through the wildest parts of the great West in search of excitement and adventure, not forgetting to look up fun and fortune at the same time.

The good he did on these trips, as he and his friends called them, was recognized by all honest and law-abiding people of the West; and, as might be supposed, the enemies he made were numerous, as well as dangerous.

Athletic, handsome, aggressive and daring, and with his wonderful coolness and excellent judgment to back him up, Young Wild West stood out as a leader, and one to be emulated by all who believe in a square deal and admire true courage and daring.

Our hero was always attired in a fancy hunting suit of buckskin when on his trips, though in the warmer climates the coat was very often dispensed with, and he appeared in a blue silk shirt.

His love for always being neat made it necessary for him to have more than one of the expensive suits, for very often he got into a scrimmage that "spoiled his clothes," to say the least.

His two partners patterned after him in their attire, and the girls wore fancy suits that were a combination of riding and hunting costumes.

Jim Dart was a boy about the same age as our hero, while Cheyenne Charlie was a man something like ten years their senior.

In spite of his vast experience as a scout and Indian fighter, Charlie had found the one to lead him when he became acquainted with the dashing young deadshot, and he always listened to his advice, and stood ready to act on any suggestion he made.

But the scout was rather hot-headed, so that made him one better fitted to follow than to lead.

Jim was one of the sort who never said much, but did a lot of thinking, and was ready to do the right thing at the right time.

Both could shoot with great accuracy, and it was seldom indeed that they wasted a shot when they were trying to hit a target, whether it be a bullseye, a grizzly, or a human being bent on murder.

Though Anna was a married woman, she was called a girl, just the same, and the three were always spoken of as the "girls."

Arietta was the only one of them who had been born and reared in the Wild West, and the result was that she could handle a rifle or revolver, or ride a mustang as well as the average plainsman.

Her courage was unprecedented, too, and she admitted that she had learned much in this line from her dashing young lover.

We must not forget to state that one of the Chinamen in the employ of Young Wild West and his friends was somewhat above the average of his race in intelligence and skill.

This was Hop Wah. His brother Wing was just a plain, every-day "heathen Chineese," a good cook and honest.

But Hop was a great deal more than this.

The fact was that he was a very clever sleight-of-hand performer, something of a chemist, in his way, and an expert card sharp.

The latter he had learned while at the different mining camps during the period he was working hard and learning how to speak "pigeon English."

But enough of him for the present.

The work of getting the camp into shape went on, and as the sun touched the line of the western horizon everything was done in that direction, and Wing started the fire to cook the evening meal.

The river at that point was rather narrow, but quite deep in the channel, and the current flowed swiftly.

Wild and Arietta walked along the bank a short distance and stood and watched it.

From where they stood the camp was hidden from view, but the smoke from the fire the Chinaman had kindled was rising above the treetops.

To a lover of scenes of natural wildness the one that stretched out before the boy and girl would have been called grand in the extreme.

Beyond them, on the other side of the river, lay a rugged range of mountains. The dark green of the hemlock blended with the lighter green of the pines, and with the rays of the setting sun shining full upon the slope, purple and gold showed here and there.

Even the gray rocks looked as though they had suddenly returned to a life that was active and changing.

The oaks were beginning to grow yellow and faded at the higher points of the range, while at the foot, near the crooked stream, clusters of berries as red as blood mingled with the green foliage that grew in various shades.

The clear blue sky overhead looked like a great canopy put there for the purpose of shielding the scene from the trespasses of those who wore the clothing common to civilization, while the swift-running stream, with its

flecks of foam, kissed by the rays of the sinking sun, seemed to speak defiance to all mankind.

Down the river to the right lay an almost unbroken stretch of prairie, with a fringe of cottonwoods and willows along the bank; to the left the yawning mouth of a rift in the earth showed, and through this came the stream known as the Rio Pecos, which flows on through the southeastern part of New Mexico, into the State of Texas, and then becomes lost in the muddy waters of the Rio Grande on its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

The scent of the wild flowers mingled with the pungent odor of the herbs that grew along the bank, while the singing of the birds that appeared to be straining a point to make a grand finish at the end of the day, made the scene more impressive.

"This is a beautiful spot, Wild," said Arietta, who had seen so many rare scenes in her travels with her dashing young lover that she seldom paid any attention to them. "I don't know when I looked upon anything natural that is more impressive."

"That's right, Et," replied the boy, nodding his approval to what she said. "But the country is full of just such scenes. There is no place like the Wild West, little girl."

"No, Wild, there isn't. I haven't seen much outside of it; but I know there can't be."

Suddenly the sound of splashing paddles came to their ears, and then it was that the beautiful scene that stretched out before them was forgotten.

A boat of some kind was coming up the river.

Instinctively Arietta stepped back, but Wild smiled and said, reassuringly:

"Don't be uneasy, Et. I reckon we are in no danger. If it happens that enemies to us are in the canoe, or whatever it is, we will see them as soon as they see us. That will make it an even thing, and when we have that I am satisfied. Take it easy, and we'll soon see who and what they are."

"All right, Wild," and the girl remained standing at his side.

The dashing young deadshot felt of his revolvers, and finding them in their proper places, waited for the craft to appear around the bend, which was but a couple of hundred feet distant from where they were standing.

The next minute it showed up.

It was not a canoe, but a flat-bottomed boat of the scow type, though pointed at the bow.

In it were seven men, all rough-looking, and four of them wielding paddles for all they were worth.

Young Wild West and Arietta remained silent and watched them.

Not until the boat was almost right before them were they observed by the men in the boat.

Then one of them saw the boy and girl standing there watching them, and he quickly let his companions know.

Instantly the paddling ceased.

"Hello, there!" cried out the man, who was sitting in the stern, as though bossing the job. "Where did you two come from, I'd like ter know?"

"Oh! we have been traveling east all day, and we landed here a little while ago," Wild answered, in his cool and easy way. "Where did you come from?"

"I reckon that ain't none of your business!"

"Is that so? Well, maybe it isn't any of your business where we came from, then."

"Maybe it ain't. But I reckon a man's got more right ter ask questions than a boy has. Jest put her ashore here, boys. We'll stop an' have a little talk with this boy and gal."

The boat was quickly headed for the bank, Wild and Arietta remaining right where they were.

Though both believed that the seven men were villains, neither of them feared them in the least.

That was not Young Wild West's way, and Arietta had learned to be just like him in that respect.

Our hero knew very well that those at the camp would hear the talking, and that they would most likely come to see what was going on.

But they would not come in a hurry, however. Charlie and Jim were always cautious about doing things, and the chances were that they would take a look at the men before showing themselves.

All of the men got out of the boat but one, and he sat at the side holding the craft to the bank by grasping a sapling that was in easy reach.

The men looked at Arietta, some of them grinning, and the girl was then certain that they were villains.

"Are yer alone here?" queried the spokesman, looking around and seeing nothing that would indicate otherwise.

"You don't see anyone with us, do you?" queried our hero.

"No, I don't. But see here, young feller! You're what I calls a little too fresh, fur a boy. Jest keep a civil tongue in your head. If yer don't somethin' might happen ter yer that yer won't like."

"Go ahead with your game, you big galoot! What do you want, anyhow?"

As he spoke Wild pulled a revolver and let its muzzle point directly at the speaker.

"I reckon you're nothing but a gang of ruffians," he went on, coolly. "Now go ahead and do what you intended to—if you can."

"Put away that gun, young feller!" cried the villain, angrily. "I ain't ther kind of a man what allows that sort of a thing, yer know."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

The revolver was now aiming steadily at his heart, and the leader of the gang turned pale.

pose of interfering with us. They thought we were alone here on the bank, and that they could probably do as they pleased with us. But I reckon they found out their mistake."

The boy spoke in such a cool and easy way that the men looked at him in astonishment.

It was quite evident that they had never seen one quite so cool as he was.

There was no doubt that he was just right in what he said, too, for the general appearance of the men, as we have said, was that which would indicate that they were ruffians.

"Hold on a minute," said the leader, doing his best to appear calm. "I reckon you folks is sorter judgin' us wrong. We didn't mean no harm to yer when we stopped here. I will say that you looked a little out of place, you an' ther gal standin' here, an' we thought we would stop an' have a little talk with yer."

"Well, you didn't go about it in the right way," retorted our hero, never once taking his revolver from the line he was pointing at. "Now you just get back in that boat and see how fast you can paddle away from here. If you don't lead is going to fly, and when I shoot I generally hit exactly what I aim at."

One of the villains lost no time in obeying the command, and then the rest followed suit.

As they got into the flat-bottomed boat Wild could not help noticing that it was pretty well loaded with saddles, bridles and lariats, which showed that in all probability the men were on their way to get horses somewhere.

The last to obey the command of the dashing young deadshot was the leader of the gang, and just as he entered the boat Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart appeared on the scene.

As Wild had supposed, his two partners had been attracted that way by the sounds of the voices, and they had been standing behind a clump of bushes but a few feet away for the last two or three minutes.

"A fine lookin' lot of galoots, I reckon," observed the scout, as he stepped to the bank, followed by Jim. "Where in thunder did they drop from, Wild?"

"Oh, they were coming up the river, and seeing us here, they thought they would stop and interfere with us, that's all, Charlie," was the reply. "They acted in such an overbearing way about it that I thought it best to curb them before they went any further. You can see that they're a bad lot; that goes without saying. I don't know about it, but I would be willing to judge that they're on their way somewhere to steal horses. See what they have got in the boat."

"That's jest about ther size of it," and Charlie nodded his approval. "I'm jest like you; I'll bet that they're horse thieves, too."

The expressions on the men's faces as they looked at each other when this was said, showed that the mark had been hit, or something like it.

"You had better be careful how you say we are thieves," spoke up the leader of the seven, flashing an angry glance on the speakers. "I want yer to understand that we are honest men. We ain't horse thieves, nor any other kind of thieves. We ain't in ther habit of being called sich, either."

CHAPTER II.

HOW WILD DISPOSED OF THE VILLAINS.

Arietta now drew a revolver also.

Pointing it at the men on the bank, she said:

"If you are not very careful, strangers, some of you will die right here. You had better get back in your boat and go on about your business."

"That's right, Et," said Wild. "I was just going to tell them that. I reckon they have gone a little too far. I have no doubt but that they stopped here just for the pur-

"It don't make any difference what you are in the habit of being called," retorted the young deadshot, in his cool and easy way. "I always say just about what I think, and if you don't like it you know just what you can do. But don't think for a moment that you can scare us. You tried that when you first came here, and I reckon you are sorry that you did so. Now then, if you don't want that craft of yours filled full of holes when you get out in the stream, you just paddle on about your business. If anyone asks you who made you leave in a hurry, you can tell him that it was Young Wild West."

On hearing the name the villains started and looked at each other in a way that showed they had heard of Young Wild West before.

But none of them deigned to speak any further just then, and soon the boat was gliding out toward the center of the river.

The four men with the paddles used them for all they were worth, and the rather ungainly craft forged rapidly ahead, in spite of the fact that the current was against it.

Young Wild West and his friends watched them until they passed out of sight around the bend a hundred yards ahead, and then they turned and walked back to the camp.

Anna and Eloise were waiting for them, and as they had heard the conversation, they were anxious to know what it was all about.

Arietta soon gave them the required information, and she had just about finished telling the story when the cook announced that the supper was ready.

Having traveled a long distance that day, they were all very hungry, so they sat down and ate a hearty meal.

They had just about finished when a rifle shot sounded from up the river bank, and a bullet whizzed past Wild's head, so close that he could hear it sing as it passed by.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he sprang to his feet and seized his rifle. "I reckon the galoots didn't go very far, after all. It seems that they want us. Lay low, everybody. I'll go and find the galoot who fired that shot."

Without the least hesitation, the dashing young deadshot started off in the bushes.

He was almost certain that it was one of the men who had taken their departure in the boat but a few minutes before that had fired the shot, for he had noticed that when he told them his name they had showed no little surprise.

Pushing his way cautiously through the bushes, Wild went on parallel with the stream, and at about a hundred feet from its bank.

He had about marked the spot where the shot came from, and when he reached a place that struck him as being pretty close to it, he became more anxious than ever, and turned in the direction of the river bank.

When he was within but a few yards of it he heard footsteps a little further up.

Then it was that he raised his rifle, so he might be ready to fire a shot at the least notice.

But the boy did not intend to shoot any of the men when he saw them unless they put up a fight.

He was not the one to fire upon an enemy when they did not see him, for he believed in giving everyone a chance.

Moving a little further along, he came to an opening in

the bushes, and then it was that he saw two men crouching behind a clump of trees near the edge of the water.

The boat lay at the bank right near them, and in it were the rest of the villains.

The two men behind the trees sat with their rifles as though expecting someone to appear,

A smile played about the lips of Young Wild West as he took all this in.

He looked upon the ground near him, and finding a stone about the size of an egg, he picked it up, and then taking aim at one of the villains, he let it go.

The stone went straight, hitting the villain on the wrist and causing him to utter a howl of pain and drop his rifle.

With a big tree to shield him, our hero was not afraid of being shot by the other, so he called out sharply:

"You have got just ten seconds to get in that boat! Get a move on you!"

It was astonishing to see how the two men made a dash for the boat.

They nearly overturned it in their haste to get in.

The craft was pushed off instantly, and then the paddles began splashing the water as the villains hurried to get away.

Wild could not help laughing.

"I reckon I'll just hurry them along a little," he muttered, and then raising his rifle to his shoulder, he took aim at the crown of the hat the man in the stern wore, and pulled the trigger.

Crang!

As the report rang out the villain uttered a cry of alarm and made a vain clutch to save his hat.

Into the water it went, however, and those handling the paddles renewed their efforts to get away.

But Wild was not satisfied yet.

Crang!

Again he fired, and this time another hat went into the water.

Crang!

Crang!

Two more of the hats were perforated, but only one of them fell overboard.

Not once did the villains attempt to fire a returning shot, which showed that they were badly frightened, indeed.

Thinking they might stop when they rounded the next bend, Wild headed along the bank of the river, taking care to keep a ridge of willows between him and the villains.

The bend was not far away, but when the boat got there it did not stop.

This showed that the villains had had quite enough of it for the time, and were bent upon getting as far away as possible.

Waiting about five minutes, and becoming satisfied on this point, our hero retraced his steps to the camp.

He met Charlie and Jim before he got there, and the smile on his face told them about what had happened.

"I reckon they'll go this time, boys," he observed, with a laugh. "I don't know when I have met such galoots as they appear to be. Why, they didn't offer to put up the least fight, and after I knocked the rifle from one of their

hands with a stone, too. I told them they had ten seconds to get into the boat and light out, and you ought to see how they went at it. Then I shot at the hats of four of them, and managed to send three of them overboard. You can bet they didn't stop to pick up the hats, either."

"I reckon if it had been me, instead of you, there would have been somethin' else besides a hat that would have got hit," spoke up the scout, a grim smile showing on his face. "Any galoot as will shoot at a feller on ther sly deserves to git dropped, an' I'm jest ther man ter do it every time."

"Well, maybe you are right, Charlie. But I don't like to shoot a man unless it's to save my own life, or that of someone else. I crept upon them without being seen, so I used a stone instead of my rifle."

"Wild is right, Charlie," said Jim Dart, as he turned in the direction of the camp. "It is nothing to anyone's credit to shoot a man when he is not looking for it, even if it may be a villain bent upon taking your own life. The easiest way is the best every time."

"Yes, ther easiest way is ther best; there ain't no doubt about that, Jim. But what kin be easier than puttin' a bullet through a galoot's heart? When that's done it's mighty certain that he won't never bother anyone ag'in. Yes, ther easiest way is ther best."

One thing about the scout was that he would never agree that it was best to let a foe get away alive, and though he always did exactly as Wild said in the matter, he was bound to say what he thought about it whenever he had the opportunity.

When they came to the camp they found the two Chinamen quarreling over something that had happened, and Charlie rushed right at them, taking each by the collar of his coat and pulling them apart.

"What's the matter with you two heathen galoots?" he demanded, making out that he was very angry. "This is a fine time ter git in a row. Don't yer know that there's about forty Injuns around ther camp at this minute, an' that they're all lookin' for heathen pig-tails."

Hop and Wing promptly forgot what they were quarrelling about, and both turned pale as they looked at the scout, whose face was as solemn as an owl's, just then, though it was hard for him to keep from laughing.

He gave them each a smark jerk, and then let their heads strike together hard enough to hurt a little, and allowed them to fall to the ground.

Both ran for the tent as fast as they could the moment they got upon their feet.

Then it was that the scout burst into a roar of laughter, and as it was catching, the rest joined in.

"Whattée mattee?" inquired Hop, who was the first to realize that it was a joke.

He came out of the tent looking rather sheepish, and then his brother followed.

"I want you two fellows to stop this quarrelling," said Wild, trying to appear severe. "Just tell me what the trouble was."

"My blother allee samee puttee some led pepper in my coffee, and len he laughée velly muchee when me dlinkee, so he," spoke up Wing, quickly. "Me no likee, so me catchee my blother by um pig-tail and allee samee givée pretty biggee pullee, so he. Len he allee samee gittee me and smackee me in um mouth. Me no likee lat."

"My blother Wing allee samee velly muchee lie," declared Hop, looking as innocent as a little child. "Me no puttee um led pepper in him coffee; he puttee in himself, and he allee samee tlinkee he puttee sugee in. He velly muchee foolee."

Wing's eyes were rather watery, which showed that he must have received a pretty good dose of the red pepper, and he was so angry to hear his brother denying the charge that it was with difficulty that he kept his hands off him.

"Wild, I reckon it would be a good idea ter let 'em fight it out," suggested Cheyenne Charlie, grinning as he spoke. "They've had lots of fights, but I ain't never seen as either of 'em got ther best of it. S'pose we let 'em fight it out ter a finish this time, an' then we'll find out who's ther best."

"No, Charlie," was the reply. "There's no use in that. It would not do any of us any good for them to bite and scratch each other until they got tired. Neither of them know how to fight, as you know, so it would not mean anything after it was all through with. I want them to stop this quarrelling, and if they don't I'll take a hand in the game, and they'll both lose their pig-tails, so they won't dare to go back to China again. You hear what I say, you heathen galoots?"

"All light, Misler Wild," came the reply from both, as if in one voice.

That settled the dispute.

Hop walked off to the spot where the horses were grazing, while his brother went and sat down with his back against a tree and promptly dropped off into a doze, just as though nothing had happened to disturb him since he had been at the camp.

CHAPTER III.

THE HORSE THIEVES AT THEIR WORK.

As the seven ruffians are to figure prominently in our story, it will be in order to follow them.

Their leader, Don Harley, had heard of Young Wild West before he met him on the river bank that evening, and he had heard enough to convince him that the boy was a dangerous one to fool with.

It is quite likely that he would not have told his men to run the boat to the bank if he had been aware that the boy standing there was our hero.

But he did not know, and when he found out he was glad enough to get away.

"Boys," said he, as the boat was forced up the stream and around the bend, "I reckon that was a putty close call. That young galoot is ther champion deadshot of ther West, so I've heard. S'pose he'd took ther notion ter try a shot at us? I reckon it would have been all over ther minute ther report sounded. But I'm glad we know he's around here, though. That means that we've got ter be on ther watch fur him. He's got a way of runnin' horse thieves an' sich like down. He seems ter know that we're horse thieves, too. That's ther queer part of it."

"Well, Don, I reckon it would be a good idea ter pick him off as soon as possible, then," spoke up one of the

men, who went by the name of Spiker. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, they say."

"That's it!" exclaimed another, who was called Hungry, because he was always ready to eat, no matter what the time of day it was, or how long it had been since he had partaken of a meal. "Let's go ashore as soon as we git around ther bend here, an' then wait fur a chance ter pick ther young galoot off. If we do that we kin lay low an' wait fur his friends ter run up. Then we kin give 'em their medicine, too. There's only one way ter do a thing, an' that's ter do it right. What do we care how many we kill, if we know that they're ag'in us, an' will land us in jail, or put ropes around our necks ther minute they git a chance?"

A cry of approval went up from the rest of those in the boat, and then it was that Don Harley decided that Hungry had spoken very wisely.

"If you're all willin' ter that we'll do it," he said, nodding his head. "In my mind, there ain't no question but that Young Wild West means ter run us down. He's heard about ther horse stealin', I s'pose, and he's come here ter have a little excitement, as he calls it, in runnin' us down. We'll stop right here an' settle ther trouble. I feel jest like killin' him from ther way he made me haul in my horns an' take to ther boat. That was a putty bad thing that we had ter do, boys. Jest think of it! That boy an' gal had ther drop on us, an' we jest had ter light out in a hurry. We would have had ter done it if no one else come on ther scene, too. They had us covered, an' there wasn't a show of gittin' back at 'em."

"That's right," nodded one of them. "I s'pose ther man an' boy what showed up was Young Wild West's pards that I've heard so much about, wasn't they?"

"Sartin they was. I know their names, too. One was Cheyenne Charlie, an' ther other was Jim Dart. Dart is ther boy, an' he's almost as bad ter fool as Young Wild West himself."

"Well," and Don Harley shook his head to show that he thought the thing could be done all right, "we'll go ashore here and see what we kin do. There's only two rifles among us, so two of ther best shots kin sneak up close enough ter git a shot at Young Wild West. The rest kin stay in the boat, an' when his pards come runnin' ter find us, which they most likely will do, they kin git their medicine."

"Which is ther best shot in ther gang, that's ther question," said the man called Spiker, looking at his companions. "I won't say as I'm any kind of a shot with a rifle, 'cause I never had much practice with one. I kin generally hold my own with a gun, though."

"We don't want ter run close enough ter 'em ter use guns," the leader retorted, shaking his head decisively.

"Young Wild West an' his pards is mighty soon with guns, I've heard, an' we don't want ter let 'em git a chance at us, if we kin help it," said Spiker.

The seven villains sat in the boat, which had now reached the shore, one of them holding fast of a bunch of grass to keep it there.

Then, for the next five minutes all the talk was as to who were to be entrusted with the mission of taking their position behind a clump of trees a few feet from the bank and shoot at Young Wild West.

They all knew that the camp of our friends could most likely be seen from that point.

At length it was decided that Spiker and a man called Oxley were to do the work.

They all agreed that Oxley was probably the best rifle shot in the party, so it was soon settled that he was to get a position from which he could see the dashing young deadshot and then fire the shot that would lay him low.

Spiker was to be in readiness to fire a second shot, in case his companion missed.

Then the two left the boat and crept up behind the trees.

As they expected, they could see the camp quite plainly.

But they could not see all our friends very well, since they were at that moment sitting upon the ground, busy eating the evening meal.

"They're eatin' their supper, boys," said Spiker, nodding to those in the boat. "We can't very well git a shot at Young Wild West jest now without runnin' ther risk of hittin' ther gals. We don't want ter shoot them, yer know. Gals is scarce articles in these here parts."

"That's right," answered Don Harley. "Be careful an' don't even hurt them gals. Is there any more besides the gals an' Young Wild West an' his pards?"

"Only two heathen Chinees, that's all," replied Oxley.

"Well, it ain't no use wastin' any shots on ther heathens jest now. What we want ter tend ter first is Young Wild West an' his pards. You jest pop over ther boy, and then you'll see how quick his pards runs over here ter git their medicine. They can't help but do that, 'cause they'll be so mad at seeing Young Wild West go down that they'll want ter git at the one that shot him mighty bad. That will give yer all ther chance in ther world ter pop them over as they come along ther bank."

What the villainous leader said certainly seemed very plausible to the rest.

It was the very thing that they would do if they were placed in such a position as Young Wild West would be after the boy got shot.

After a while the chance came to take the shot at the dashing boy hero.

Oxley was lying flat upon his stomach, and pushing the barrel of his rifle between two trees, he rested it upon his left hand, his elbow upon the ground, and then taking careful aim, he fired the shot that so narrowly missed our hero.

So quickly did our friends get out of their range of vision that neither of the two men knew whether the boy had been hit or not.

But they remained right where they were, hoping that such had been the case, that Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart would come hurrying to the scene.

What happened a little later the reader already knows.

The shot had missed, and the result was that Young Wild West reached the scene unknown to them, and forced them to go back to the boat again.

As they paddled away up the stream, and the young deadshot's rifle cracked four times, putting a hole through as many hats and knocking three of the four into the water, the seven villains were actually in a state of terror.

They were rank cowards, after all, and knowing that they were at the mercy of the boy, who was called the

Champion Deadshot of the West, they paddled for their lives.

Not until they had rounded the next bend in the river did one of them make an effort to speak a word.

Then Don Harley, who was sitting in the stern of the craft, breathed a sigh of relief.

"Jumpin' cats!" he exclaimed. "That was awful, wasn't it?"

"It certainly was," answered Oxley, shrugging his shoulders, and looking behind him, as though he expected to see the boy following them along the bank.

"Why in thunder didn't some of you galoots sittin' here in ther boat open fire on ther boy?" asked Spiker, who now seemed to be the bravest of the lot. "Yer sartinly had all ther chance in ther world ter do it."

"Why didn't you take a shot at him when Oxley's rifle was knocked out of his hand by the stone ther boy throwed?" queried Hungry.

"Why didn't I?" echoed the villain; "why, I didn't have no chance. You fellers in ther boat did, though. He wasn't watchin' ther whole blamed lot of us, I reckon."

"Never mind arguin' about it," spoke up the leader. "I will say why I didn't do any shootin'. I knowed if I did, an' happened ter miss, which is what I would most likely have done, 'cause I was so much excited, I'd got a lead pill right through ther heart. I ain't got no insurance on my life, so I'm worth a whole lot more alive than I would be dead. I'm mighty thankful that I got away with a whole skin. But yer kin bet this ain't goin' ter be ther end of it. There's more than one way ter kill a cat. We'll go right on up ther river till we come ter Dod's, an' then we'll git them horses, jest ther same as if nothin' hadn't happened. After we git 'em all out, one of us will ride down ther river on ther other side, an' maybe then we kin find a chance ter clean out Young Wild West an' his pards. I know the young galoot is after us, 'cause he wouldn't have said we was horse thieves if he wasn't. But that ain't goin' ter stop me from gittin' ther horses we have made up our minds ter steal this night."

This remark seemed to suit all hands, and his companions hastened to assure him that they would stick to him.

The fact was that they had located the horses they intended to steal that night while sneaking around the ranch a day or two before.

There were just a dozen of the animals, and they had been picked from a herd of bronchos to be sold to a man in the nearest town, which was probably twenty miles away from the ranch.

The horses were all pretty good ones, and that was what the thieves wanted to get hold of.

Many times before had they made successful raids upon the nearby ranches, and the money they had made by doing so amounted to quite a sum.

When not out on their raids the villains posed as cowboys, they being in the employ of an old man who ran things rather carelessly upon the ranch, and did not know much about managing the same.

The boat kept on up the river, and about an hour after darkness set in the lights of the ranch they proposed to make the raid upon loomed up on the right.

The house and buildings were situated very close to the

stream, and when they had reached a clump of willows that overhung the water the boat was pushed in and made fast.

"As we might need this boat some other time, one of us has got ter take it on back," said the leader, as he stepped out upon the bank. "Whoever does this has got ter go on down right past ther camp of Young Wild West. Now then, who's goin' ter be ther man?"

There was a short silence, and then Oxley answered:

"I'll do it. There's a pretty strong current runnin', especially right along by the camp of them galoots, and I reckon I kin let her drift far enough, so they won't hear me. It's a putty dark night, so they won't see me, anyhow."

This being agreed upon, all but Oxley set out for the corral.

It was quite easy for them to do their villainous work, and in less than fifteen minutes the horses had been caught, and those they intended to ride saddled and bridled.

Then the horse thieves started for their headquarters, which lay about fifteen miles to the south, and probably seven miles from the spot where our friends had camped for the night.

Oxley paddled the boat along, little dreaming that he was going to meet with a rather exciting adventure before he reached his destination.

Down the river he went, sometimes hardly using his paddle at all, but just steering the craft.

His companions got far ahead of him, but he cared nothing for that.

He knew they would have a good supper waiting for him, and there was whisky in the big jug.

But as the man drew near the vicinity of Young Wild West, and ceased paddling entirely, he became drowsy.

Reclining almost at full length, he allowed the boat to drift on with the current.

Then he fell into a doze, and from this into a sound sleep.

The paddle dropped from his hand and went on by itself, and the boat simply drifted along as the current made it.

Oxley was in the midst of a very pleasant dream when a sudden jerk upon the boat threw him over on his side and caused him to awaken.

"What's ther matter?" he asked, forgetting where he was and sitting up suddenly.

"Hello, Misler Melican Man! Lis um velly nicee evening, so be," said a voice, and then he realized that a Chinaman was bending over him.

CHAPTER. IV.

CHARLIE AND HOP TAKE A PRISONER.

When it grew dark Young Wild West and his friends sat near the tents by the light of a lantern.

This was placed on the ground in a hollow, so that the light might not show for any great distance.

To help in this brush was piled around it.

The weather was too warm to keep a fire going, so the lantern answered the purpose of a light.

Of course our hero saw to it that a watch was kept.

He did not mean to allow the seven villains to get another chance to fire upon them.

It was about nine o'clock when all but Cheyenne Charlie and Hop Wah turned in.

They were to stay on guard until midnight, and then Jim Dart and Wing Wah would take a trick until three, when Wild would go on for the balance of the night.

It was not long after they assumed their duties that Hop began fixing up a fishing line.

"What are yer goin' ter do?" asked the scout.

"Me allee sancee catchee nicee mess of fish for breakfast, Misler Charlie," was the reply.

"Oh! do yer think there's any fish in ther river, Hop?"

"Yes, plenty fishee maybe, so be."

"Well, maybe there is. You kin go ahead an' try it. I'll keep a watch around, an' I'll watch you, too, ter see that yer don't git asleep an' fall overboard."

Charlie chuckled as he said this, for nothing would have pleased him any better than to have such a thing happen.

He had it in for the clever Chinaman, since Hop had got the best of him so many times in gambling games, and had often made him the victim of a practical joke.

Hop soon got his hooks and line ready, and cutting a pole, he rigged it to his satisfaction.

By digging in the mellow soil along the river bank, with the lantern to give him light, he found plenty of worms for bait.

Soon he was sitting on the bank, where there was an opening between the trees, and fishing away for all he was worth.

When Hop thought there were fish there he was right, for it was not long before he had a bite.

The result was that he landed a fish that weighed over a pound.

"Lat pletty gooddee," muttered the Chinaman. "Me allee light. Me catchee plenty fishee for um breakfast, so be."

He baited his hook and tried again.

The fish were there, and they bit almost as fast as he could get his line in the water for the next ten minutes.

Hop kept landing them, and as it was not the first time he had fished in that part of the country, he knew they were very good to eat.

Just as he had landed the twelfth fish his attention was attracted by some large object floating in the river.

It was coming right close to the bank, too, and it did not take him two seconds to see that it was a boat.

"Lat velly stlange," thought the Celestial, as he looked in surprise.

But it quickly flashed upon him that the seven men Young Wild West had the trouble with were in a boat, and this must be the one they went up the river in.

He looked around for Charlie, but he was nowhere in sight just then.

Hop decided that there was no one in the boat, for it was being carried along by the current, and the wind being from the other side of the river, it had been blown close to the bank.

He decided to catch it and pull it ashore.

His fishing line would do that, provided he went about it carefully.

Measuring the distance, he made a cast.

The hook caught somewhere on the gunwale of the boat and stuck fast.

Then Hop pulled gently and the boat came ashore.

For the first time he saw that there was someone in it.

A man was lying at full length, his head resting on the seat at the stern.

Hop thought he was dead, but he decided that it was best not to be too sure about it, so he quickly made the boat fast, and then he hastened to find the scout.

When Charlie heard of the big catch the Chinaman had made he was not a little surprised.

He followed him to the spot, and then he quickly took in the situation.

By listening a minute or two he was able to hear the regular breathing of a sleeping person.

"Git in ther boat an' wake him up, Hop," he whispered, as he drew a revolver from the holster. "I'll see that nothin' happens ter yer."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie," was the ready reply, and then Hop stepped into the boat.

The jar aroused the sleeper, and as he awoke and heard the voice of the Chinaman, who was bending over him, he was amazed.

"Velly nicee evening, so be," repeated Hop, in his bland way.

"Eh? What's that you say?" and Oxley looked up at him, as though he could not imagine just where he was.

"Me say um velly nicee evening, so be. What you do asleep in um boat?"

Then the horse thief understood.

It flashed upon him that he had fallen asleep, and that by doing so he had drifted into the hands of enemies.

But he was one of the sort who can find a way out of a difficulty quite handily.

Knowing that he would probably be recognized, he rubbed his eyes, and shaking his head, sadly, said:

"My pards left me 'cause I wouldn't agree ter do some horse stealin'. I started down ther river in ther boat after they went away, an' I must have fell asleep. I'm an honest man, an' I want yer ter know that."

"All right," answered the scout. "But don't talk too loud. There ain't no use of wakin' them what's asleep in ther camp. Jest come out of that boat, an' be mighty careful how yer act, too."

Oxley looked up and saw that the speaker held a revolver in his hand.

This meant that there was nothing for him to do but to obey.

Hop came out first, and then the villain followed.

"Is ther boat tied fast, Hop?" asked the scout.

"Yes, Misler Charlie; she allee sancee velly muchee fastee," was the reply.

"Good enough! Now jest take this galoot's gun an' knife away from him."

The Chinaman was not long in doing this.

Oxley made no objections, for he knew it would be useless.

He submitted like a lamb.

Charlie took him by the arm, and still keeping the revolver in his hand, walked him to the camp.

No one had been aroused by what had taken place, so he proceeded to tie the prisoner to a tree.

Charlie made a good job of this, for he never did anything by halves.

Oxley was destined to stay there until he was released by someone other than himself.

"Go on with your fishin', Hop. I reckon ther galoot is all right. If he goes ter makin' a noise that will wake 'em up I'll put a bullet in him. I'm goin' ter leave him jest as he is till Wild gets up. Then he'll be asked some questions, I reckon."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie."

The Chinaman went back to the river bank, and after he had fixed up his line, resumed his fishing.

The fish were there, and he succeeded in landing a great many more than would be needed for breakfast.

When he had tired of it, he carried them to the camp for his brother to clean, and then joined the scout.

Midnight came and then Charlie aroused Jim and Wing.

Jim was astonished to find a prisoner tied to the tree in the camp, but it was explained to him by the scout in a very few words.

"Leave him be there till Wild wakes up," Charlie added. "I reckon he's all right enough."

"I reckon so," Jim answered, when he saw how securely the prisoner was bound.

"Say," said Oxley, speaking in a low, pleading tone of voice, "let me go, won't yer, young feller? I never done nothin' ter any of yer. I got in bad company, that's all, an' I've shook them. I never intended ter go back with 'em."

"You wait till the boss gets up," Dart retorted. "I haven't got anything to say about it."

The villain became silenced right away.

Charlie and Hop were soon sound asleep, and then leaving Wing to watch the prisoner, Jim walked about in search of anyone who might happen to be sneaking about the vicinity.

But there was no one to be found, and so the time dragged on until it was time to arouse our hero.

When Jim awoke him he was not long in letting him know of the capture Charlie and Hop had made.

"One of the horse thieves, eh?" the young deadshot remarked. "I was sure they were horse thieves. Hop caught the boat, with the galoot asleep in it, eh? Well, that is pretty good. I suppose the rest went to steal horses, while he came down the river with the boat. I reckon he made a mistake in going to sleep, though."

Wild went over to him and began to question him.

He asked him his name, and how it was he came to leave his companions, and Oxley answered in a way that seemed to be straightforward enough.

He told his name, but lied in the rest, however.

Our hero made out that he believed he told the truth.

"Suppose you tell me the name of the galoot who fired the shot at me before dark?" he queried.

"That was Don Harley, ther leader of ther gang," was the reply.

This was a point-blank lie, since the man had done it himself, as the reader knows.

"Don Harley, eh? So that is the name of the leader of the bunch of horse thieves, is it?"

"Yes, that's right. They're a mighty bad lot, too. If I'd knowed what they was up ter I wouldn't have come up ther river with 'em. I only struck ther gang yisterday, an' they seemed ter be sich good fellers that I thought I'd stay with 'em. They promised ter git me a job at ther ranch they worked at, an' it wasn't till we got right where they was goin' ter take ther horses that they told me what was up. I balked then, an' they told me ter take ther boat an' light out. I done that quick enough, an' I was glad ter do it, too."

"All right; maybe you did the right thing, and maybe you didn't. We'll find out about that later on. I reckon you're pretty comfortable as you are, so you can stay here till after it gets daylight. I haven't made up my mind whether to shoot or hang you yet."

While Wild was well satisfied that the man was a scoundrel, and that he had lied in the greater part of what he said, he had no intention of either hanging or shooting him.

He merely said that to see what effect it would have upon him.

Oxley became frightened right away, as might be supposed.

"Have mercy on me," he pleaded. "Let me go, Young Wild West. I'll never steal another horse as long as I live, if yer do."

"Is that so? Well, just shut up now. You might awaken my friends. I'll see what is to be done with you in the morning, as I just said."

The wretched prisoner tried to plead further, but Wild commanded him to shut up, so he did.

The night wore on, and daylight soon came.

Then it was not long before it began to grow yellow in the east.

Just as the sun showed itself Wild called his sleeping companions.

They all got out in quick time, including the two Chinamen.

Wing was pretty sleepy, but that made no difference; he knew it was imperative that he should get up, so he did so.

The girls were much surprised to find out that there was a prisoner in the camp, for they had not been awakened by the conversation during the night.

"Who is it, Wild?" asked Arietta.

"One of the horse thieves," was the reply. "He is one of the two I found crouching behind the trees last night, after the shot was fired at me. He told me it was the leader of the crowd who fired at me, but I know better. It was either he or the other fellow who did it, for they were the only ones who had rifles, and were waiting for a chance to shoot again. He told me a pretty good story, but I don't believe much of it. I reckon we'll hang him to a tree somewhere around here, and leave him for a warning to the rest of the horse thieves."

Oxley heard this, of course, and the way he pleaded and begged was quite disgusting to come from the lips of a full-grown man.

Arietta knew very well that her dashing young lover did not intend to lynch the villain.

That was something he had never done in his life, or taken part in, even.

She smiled when she saw how childish the prisoner was acting about it.

Breakfast was prepared as soon as the cook could do it, and then, when all hands had eaten, Wild told Hop to untie the captive's hands, so he might eat.

"I don't want nothin' ter eat," Oxley declared, when the food was brought to him. "If I've got ter die, I might as well go on an empty stomach."

But Hop went on and untied his hands.

CHAPTER V.

OXLEY REJOINS HIS COMPANIONS.

Oxley shook his head as Hop offered him a cup of coffee and some food.

"I said I didn't want anything to eat," he declared. "What's the use of me eatin' anything, when I know that I have got ter die? Young Wild West said as how he didn't know whether he was goin' ter hang me or shoot me. If I have got ter die I reckon I don't want anything ter eat."

"Lat allee light," said the Chinaman, smiling in his bland way. "You allee samee eatee plenty breakfast. Len you hangee allee samee velly muchee quickee; makee you lillie more heavy, so be, and you soonee die."

This sort of talk did not tend to make the wretched prisoner feel any better.

He seemed to feel certain that Wild meant to take his life, and while he was in that state of mind it made him feel like anything but eating his breakfast, no doubt.

But Hop was bound that he should eat something, so placing the food before him, he took from under his coat the big, old-fashioned six-shooter he always carried with him.

"You see lis?" he asked, shaking it under the man's nose.

"Don't p'int that at me!" cried Oxley, putting up his hands in terror. "Look out! It might go off!"

"You allee samee eatee, or me shootee you stlaight through your head!" threatened the Chinaman, still smiling, as though it was all a great joke, which it was.

"Well, if I've got ter eat, I s'pose I must," and with a resigned look on his face, Oxley reached for the food and began swallowing it without hardly chewing it.

Hop kept toying with the weapon while this was going on.

Finally the prisoner took up the tin cup of coffee and started to drink it.

It was boiling hot, so he burned his mouth in the effort.

As he held the cup away from him Hop suddenly thrust the muzzle of his revolver in it and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The cup was blown from the hand of the man, while what coffee there was in it scattered around the spot.

Oxley uttered a yell of fear, for probably he thought he had been shot.

"What are you doing, Hop?" demanded our hero, as he ran over to the spot. "Been destroying one of the cups, eh? You must think we have plenty of them."

"Lat allee light, Mislir Wild," answered the China-

man, blandly. "Um cup velly muchee old, so be; it allee samee lusty. Me makee lillie fun with um plisoner."

"Well, get him another cup of coffee. I reckon he will drink it all right, especially when I tell him that we are not going to kill him. I have made up my mind to let him go. We don't want to be bothered with a prisoner, anyhow."

A cry of joy came from the lips of Oxley when he heard this.

What he heard seemed to be too good to be true.

"Do yer mean that, Young Wild West?" he asked, turning his gaze upon the face of the dashing young deadshot.

"Yes, I mean it, Oxley. I know you are a villain, and that you are well deserving of being hanged or shot; but I never did anything like that in my life, and I am not going to begin on you. If you are to be hanged someone else will have to do it, I reckon. But as for the shooting part of it, if ever I catch you putting up a fight against us, or doing anything contemptible, I will certainly send a bullet through your heart."

"Thank yer!" cried the man, his eyes gleaming with pure joy. "You kin bet your life that I won't never raise a hand ag'in you or any of your friends."

He drank the coffee that the cook gave him, and then, as his appetite had suddenly come to him, he asked for something more to eat.

The fish that Hop had caught the night before had made more than sufficient for our friends, so there was plenty left to feed the prisoner, and he certainly ate heartily now.

Wild was now certain that the companions of the man had made a raid on some ranch that could not be so very far away, and that they had gone away with a number of horses that did not belong to them.

He was going to take it upon himself to trap the horse thieves and get back the stolen property: but he thought it would be a good idea to first pay a visit to the ranch.

Feeling certain that he could obtain enough information from the prisoner as to the whereabouts of the place the horses had been stolen from, he waited until he had finished eating and then went up to him.

"Now then," said he, looking at him keenly. "I am going to ask you a couple of questions, and if I have any doubt as to your telling the truth I may change my mind about letting you go."

"Go ahead and ask me anything you want, Young Wild West," was the reply. "I'll tell ther truth, no matter what kind of a question yer ask me."

"Well, then, how many horses did you steal last night—your friends, I mean?"

"I don't exactly know that, but I think they was goin' ter try and git twelve that had been picked out of a herd ter sell by ther man that owned them. I didn't go with ther gang, yer know."

"How far is the ranch from here—the one the horses were stolen from, I mean?"

"Jest about fifteen miles up ther river, on ther other side. A man named Dod owns ther ranch, an' he raises more horses than he does cows an' steers. He makes a sort of business out of stolen mustangs, an' he has some mighty good ones, too."

"I suppose you know just how good they are. But I won't ask you any more questions. You can go now. I want you to go right straight to your friends, and when you meet them tell them Young Wild West and his partners are after them, and are going to get them inside of twenty-four hours. I mean just what I say, and you can bet all you're worth that we'll get them, too. If you are with them at the time you will have to take your medicine, one way or the other."

Oxley looked at the face of the young deadshot as this was said, and it was easy for him to tell that what the boy said came from the heart.

"All right," he said. "I was goin' ter strike out for myself, and let ther gang go. But since you want me ter tell 'em that, I s'pose I had better hunt 'em up and do it."

"Oh, I reckon you had no intention of going off by yourself. You meant to find them just as quickly as you could, and you know it. You know what I said about telling me a lie."

The villain winced at this, and he began to believe that there was really no use in trying to lie to Young Wild West.

At a word from Wild Hop untied the rope that held the prisoner to the tree.

Oxley got up, and after straightening himself out started for the river.

"I s'pose I kin take my boat, can't I?" he asked.

"Yes, go ahead and take it. I reckon we haven't any use for it. But say!"

"What do you want ter know, Young Wild West?"

"How far have you got to go before you meet your gang?"

"Jest about seven miles down the river," was the truthful reply.

"All right; go ahead. Remember what I told you."

"You kin bet I will," came the reply, and then the villain untied the rope that held the boat to the bank, and stepping in pulled out toward the middle of the stream.

To say that he was much elated at getting away would hardly be expressing it.

The villain felt so good over it that he could hardly keep from whistling to give vent to his delight.

Down the river he went, paddling along as if he was in a great hurry.

But he really was, in fact, for he knew that Don Harley and the rest would be wondering what had detained him.

In less than an hour he had covered the seven miles down the river, and then turning unto a tributary of the stream, that was shielded on both sides by overhanging willows and rank weeds, he went along until he came to a spot where there was a well-beaten path to be seen running over to the right.

Oxley tied the craft to a tree and then hurried along the path.

Through the thin strip of timber he could see a tumble-down ranch house and the buildings belonging to it.

This was the headquarters of the horse thieves.

As has been said, they were employed by a man, who knew little or nothing about ranching in the West, and

they occupied the house with him, since he had no wife or servants.

"I reckon they must have got up a little late this mornin'," he muttered, as he saw smoke rising from the chimney of the house. "It ain't likely they have had their breakfast yet. But I have had mine, an' a mighty good one it was, too. I didn't feel like eating it first off, but when I found that I was to be let off I got sich an appetite that I could have eaten most anything. Well, I'll tell ther boys jest what Young Wild West said. I know what they'll do, though. They'll jest strike out an' try ter git him afore he gits ther chance ter git us. That's ther only thing to do, anyhow. I told him enough about 'em to make it dangerous for all hands of us, and if we don't git him he certainly will git us. That goes without sayin', 'cause Young Wild West an' his pards has got ther name of doing what they strike out for. Well, I'll hear what Don an' ther rest of the boys has ter say about it, mighty quick now."

He soon passed through the narrow timber strip, and then made his way to the house, which was less than a quarter of a mile distant.

As he reached it he found his companions eating breakfast in the big living room of the house.

The owner of the ranch had gone away a week before and was not expected back inside of a month.

He had left things at the ranch to be run by his hired men as they saw fit to do it.

They had not robbed him of much, as yet, but Don Harley had often said to his companion that in case things got too warm for them to stay around those parts any longer they would clean out the old man, and then make for some place where they were not known.

Oxley thought of this as he approached the house, and when he joined his companions it was in his mind to advise them that in case they could not catch Young Wild West and his partners napping they had better clean out their employer and leave without delay.

"Well, if here ain't Oxley!" exclaimed Don Harley, who was sitting at the head of the table, a plate of bacon and eggs before him. "Where in thunder have yer been all night, pard?"

"Oh, I stopped at ther camp of Young Wild West an' stayed there all night," was the reply. "They wanted me ter stay, an' I couldn't very well refuse 'em. They used me mighty nice, you can bet. I had a fine breakfast afore I left 'em an hour ago."

The villains were astonished to hear this, for by the way Oxley talked, he had really been the invited guest of Young Wild West and his friends.

"Yer stopped with Young Wild West an' his friends over night, did yer?" the leader of the band asked, after he had recovered from his astonishment. "How in thunder did yer come to do that? Didn't they know yer?"

"Oh, yes, they knowed me all right," and Oxley grinned in a feeble way.

Then he sat down and related all that had happened, the horse thieves listening in silence.

Not until he had finished did anyone say anything, and then the villain called Hungry blurted out:

"Well, that sorter beats anything I ever heard tell of, boys! It means that we've either got ter git Young

Wild West or he'll git us. Now, what are we goin' ter do about it?"

"Git him, of course," answered Don Harley, just as though it would be an easy thing to do. "You don't s'pose we are goin' ter let him ketch us an' have us lynched, do you? Not much. I, for one, ain't that kind of a hairpin."

"Well, he's goin' ter Dod's Ranch first, an' then he'll take ther trail, most likely," observed Oxley. "The best thing we kin do is ter go over that way an' wait for him to come along."

"That's right," nodded the leader, showing his approval at what the man said. "We'll do that. But we needn't be in an awful hurry about it, 'cause it's most likely that they'll stop at the ranch house."

"If they do that it's purty sartin that they'll leave ther gals there," Oxley retorted. "There's three mighty fine-lookin' gals with Young Wild West, I kin tell yer. I had a good chance ter see 'em, which you fellers didn't. Two of 'em ain't nothin' more'n children, but I reckon they're old enough ter marry, if it come ter ther pinch. Now then, an idea has just struck me. If we could only git Young Wild West an' his pards started on our trail, an' then some of us sneak around to ther ranch house, we might be able ter git hold of them gals. It won't take ther whole lot of us ter drop Young Wild West an' his pards, 'cause that kin be done without them expectin' it. There's sich a thing as layin' an ambush, you know, boy."

"By jingo!" exclaimed Don Harley, rising from the table. "That's ther best thing yet! Boys, we won't only drop Young Wild West an' his pards, but we'll git them gals an' fetch 'em over here. There ain't no one as would ever think of lookin' here for any gals that was missin'. Old Belcher has got a mighty good reputation around here, an' them what knows him wouldn't ever think that he would allow anything like that goin' on. Nobody knows that he's gone away, 'cept us."

As might be supposed, all of the villains were captivated by the suggestion that Oxley had made.

While they had intended to push on with the horses, so they might sell them to a villain some twenty miles down the river, who always watched for the chance to buy stolen horses, and paid about half what they were worth, they thought they could wait until later.

The fact was that they all knew that if they were going ahead with the business they were engaged in they must get rid of Young Wild West and his partners.

Instead of waiting any length of time, they got ready to strike out at once for Dod's Ranch.

They all had horses of their own, and in a very few minutes they had saddled their steeds, and after closing the ranch house all seven of them started for the trail they had followed when they brought the horses from Dod's Ranch.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RACE BETWEEN THE SORREL AND THE BAY.

"Break up camp and load the pack-horses," said Wild to the two Chinamen after the villain, Oxley, had taken his departure. "I reckon we'll head straight for Dod's Ranch and find just what the horse thieves are up to."

"That's right," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, giving a nod of approval. "It ain't likely it'll be very hard ter catch ther thieves. They have sorter got a notion that they want ter take you, Wild, and that will make 'em hang around somewhere."

The villain they had captured told them that it was about fifteen miles up the river to the ranch, and Wild believed that he told the truth when he said this.

This meant that they ought to get there in about an hour, as the traveling was very good in those parts.

It was not long before everything was in readiness, and then mounting their horses they rode away, following the course of the river.

In due time they came in sight of the ranch, which lay on the opposite side of the stream, and then they looked about for a place to ford the river and get across.

They were not long in finding this, and in a very few minutes they reached the other side.

As they got a good view of the ranch house and its surroundings they could see that there were plenty of horses there.

Some were grazing along the range and others were in a big corral a mile distant from the house.

There was a small pen nearer the house, and as our hero looked at this he saw that it contained probably fifty horses, and that there were two or three men at work there.

"I reckon the ranchman and some of his cowboys are over there," said our hero, nodding to his partners. "Come on, we'll go over and see."

Before they got very far they could see that they were observed by the man, who promptly stopped their work with the horses and waited for them to approach.

"Hello, there!" called out one of the men as they came within about a hundred yards of the spot. "I reckon you're welcome, strangers. I'm Bill Dod, an' this is my ranch. Come right along."

They all rode up and halted near the little corral and then one of the cowboys exclaimed:

"Blamed if it ain't Young Wild West, Bill! It's him as sure as you're born!"

"Is that so?" and the ranchman looked surprised. "Well, I'm mighty glad ter meet yer, Young Wild West. I don't know of anyone else in ther world I'd rather meet than you jest now. I'm in trouble, yer see. Twelve of my best horses disappeared from this here corral last night."

"So I heard," our hero answered, coolly.

"What's that?" cried the ranchman. "You heard about it? Who in thunder told you? Why we only knowed it about half an hour ago."

"One of the thieves told us about it."

As he said this Wild dismounted and putting out his hand he grasped that of the ranchman and shook it heartily.

"Yer met one of ther theives, eh?" and Bill Dod opened his mouth with more astonishment than ever.

"Yes, we had one of them in our camp all night. We let him go this morning, after he had told us all about the affair of last night. But that's all right. I reckon we'll get them for you, and you will get your horses back, too."

The ranchman wanted to know all about it, of course, so Wild soon told him all they had learned.

"Great ginger!" he exclaimed. "So it was Don Harley, eh? Well, that galoot has sorter been under suspicion a few times, but no one has seemed ter be able ter prove anything ag'in him. So one of 'em took ther boat back an' fell asleep in it, so ther Chinaman got him, eh? Well, that was a pretty good catch, I reckon. Now we know jest who to look for."

Dod then shook hands with everyone in the party, not forgetting the two Chinamen.

He invited them all to go to the house with him, which they all did, and then his wife and daughter were quickly introduced.

The ranchman was much elated at having found out who the horse thieves were, and as he had heard of Young Wild West and what he and his partners were in the habit of doing to such villains, he seemed to be perfectly at his ease, and no longer worried about the disappearance of his horses.

The dashing young deadshot had declared that they would be returned to him, and Dod had enough confidence in him to believe it.

"I've only got three men on the place with me jest now," he said, as our hero and his partners walked out with him, leaving the girls in the house with Mrs. Dod and her daughter. "But I reckon you three, with the four of us, will be enough ter tackle Don Harley an' his gang."

"I reckon you and your men won't have to go at all, if you don't want to. If we three can't handle that gang of galoots I'll give up trying to make crooked men straight, that's all. I handled them pretty well alone last night just before dark, I reckon. If you had seen how they paddled up the river in that boat when I was shooting at their hats you would have thought so, I think."

"It's a pity yer didn't put ther bullets through their heads instead of their hats."

"Well, I never like to do anything like that. It's bad enough to put a bullet through a man's head when he's trying to put one through yours, let alone doing it when he's trying to run away from you."

"That's so, too. You didn't know for sure that they was horse thieves then. But you did know that one of them tried ter drop yer, though, and that ought to have been enough ter make yer put some lead in 'em. But you know your business, Young Wild West. I ain't goin' ter say any more. You have said you would git them horses back for me an' catch ther galoots, an' I believe yer will. I want ter help yer an' I mean ter do it, so all you have got ter do is ter tell me what ter do an' yer kin bet you'll find me right there."

Wild thought a moment, and then looking at the three cowboys, who were more than anxious to accompany him on the trail of the horse thieves, as he could see by the way they looked, he said:

"Well, if you and your men want to go with us, come ahead. I don't want to be too long about this business, so with a little help I suppose we can do it all the quicker. We were going to start right out after the galoots before we came here, but I thought I would send

a message to them with the fellow called Oxley, so that they would get started up a little and try to catch me. They have all heard of me, you see, and they haven't no love for me, you can bet."

"I'll bet they ain't," retorted the ranchman. "Well, if you are ready to start out now, I'll git my horse, and then we'll go ahead. If them galoots have got my horses over at Belcher's, I'll bet that Belcher don't know anything about it."

"Maybe they haven't got them there now," spoke up Jim Dart. "They might have gone on further with them."

"Well, if they have we'll catch them, just the same," Wild said, in his cool and easy way. "It will take a little longer, that's all. The girls will be all right here at the ranch until we come back. It just suits them to be with some of their own sex for a while, I reckon."

"An' it just suits my wife an' darter to have 'em, too," spoke up Dod. "They're mighty glad ter have gal visitors, you can bet. It ain't so very often that they do have 'em, either, an' that makes it all the more pleasant for 'em when they do."

In a few minutes the ranchman and his three cowboys were ready to join in the pursuit of the horse thieves.

Dod got at our hero's side as they rode away, and looking at the sorrel stallion the boy was mounted on, he nodded and said:

"I'm a purty good jedge of horse flesh, Young Wild West, an' I'm goin' ter tell yer right ter your face that that's as fine a stallion as I ever sot eyes on."

"Well," was the reply, "Spitfire is certainly all right. I've never seen his match at speed and endurance; and he's just as faithful as he can be, too. Lots of men have offered me big prices for him, but I don't think any one man has got enough money to pay for a horse that can buy him. I tamed him when he was nothing more than a wild colt on the plains, and after he had killed two or three men and hurt half a dozen more, too. Once I had him under control it was easy to teach him how to behave himself. He has done that ever since, and the longer I have him the better I like him."

"I don't blame you a bit. This horse of mine is a good one, too. I ain't never seen his match yet, though I won't say he kin outride yours or stick on a journey any longer; but I would jest like ter have a little try with you some time, so I could see if there was a horse as kin run faster than mine."

"Well, as we are in a hurry just now, suppose we let them go for about five miles without a stop," suggested our hero.

"Oh, that wouldn't be fair," and the ranchman shook his head. "You have rode fifteen or twenty miles this mornin', an' my horse is fresh. I want ter do ther thing square when I race. I don't want ter take no advantage of yer."

"That's all right. The fifteen or twenty miles that Spitfire rode this morning is just about enough to warm him up for business. Don't think anything like that, Mr. Dod. You just let your horse out right now. I can tell by the looks of him that he's a mighty good one, and I want to find out just how fast he can go."

"Well, if you insist on it I'll give yer a try. But if I

happen ter beat you I won't call it square, 'cause my horse is fresh an' yours ain't. Here she goes!"

Without waiting another minute, or telling any of the rest what was up, the ranchman urged his horse forward at a smashing gallop.

The steed was a dark bay and very clean-limbed, and the way he started off showed that he was made of the right kind of material that goes to make up a good, all-round horse.

"I reckon we'll leave you fellows in the rear," said Wild, as he turned in the saddle and waved his hand to his partners and the cowboys. "Dod is going to show me how fast his cayuse can run."

A cheer was the reply to this, and then Wild started after the ranchman.

For half a mile he let the bay keep about fifty yards ahead of him.

Wild could see that the steed was not exactly doing its best, but he was pretty certain that he could not increase the pace a great deal.

Spitfire, on the other hand, was going along at what might have been called an easy gallop for him, and when the time came he would be able to increase it to such an extent that the bay would stand no chance whatever, unless it might be that endurance would count in the end.

There was no way of telling just how far five miles might be except by guessing at it.

But Wild was a pretty good judge of distances, and after the first mile had been covered, according to his estimation of it, he let Spitfire out a little and rapidly overtook the ranchman.

As the sorrel stallion got abreast of the bay the ranchman uttered a cry and then his horse forged ahead a little.

It was then that the real race began, for the bay was certainly showing great endurance.

His breathing was not a bit more labored than that of the sorrel, and Wild was not slow to notice this.

But just how long the bay could hold out at the terrific pace he did not know.

But when he had told Dod that he had never seen a horse that was a match in speed and endurance of the gallant sorrel our hero had told the truth.

Many were the races he had been in, both for the glory of it and when his very life was staked on the result.

On went the two blooded animals, Wild's partners and the cowboys gradually dropping further in the rear.

If they had done their best, they could not possibly have kept up a pace that would hold to that of the sorrel and bay.

Spitfire was running now at about the rate he always did until the final spurt came, and when Wild saw the bay holding the gait it occurred to him that perhaps he might have a spurt that would make him a dangerous rival.

Instead of five miles, the race continued until fully ten had been covered, and the two horses were nearly side by side.

But just then our hero noticed that the bay was beginning to weaken slightly.

The ranchman must have noticed it, too, for he turned and called out:

"See that blasted tree out about half a mile ahead, Young Wild West?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I see it."

"Well, then, the first one as gets ter that tree wins the race. What do yer say?"

"All right. I'm satisfied."

The ranchman now settled right down to business. He kept the same gait until the blasted tree was only about a quarter of a mile ahead.

Then he spoke sharply to his horse and the result was that the bay started ahead like an arrow from the bow.

He gained fully ten yards on the sorrel almost before Wild was aware of it.

But nothing daunted, the dashing young deadshot gave Spitfire the rein and spoke to him.

Away bounded the sorrel stallion, and gradually the gap that lay between the two horses was narrowed.

As the ranchman was within a hundred yards of the goal, Spitfire gave a sudden bound and shot past the bay like a streak.

He did not slacken the pace, either, until he had reached the blasted tree, and turning in the saddle Wild saw that Dod was easily six lengths behind him.

"You win!" shouted Dod, as he brought his horse down to a trot. "That's ther first time my horse has ever been beat. I congratulate yer, Young Wild West, You're—"

Crang! Crang!

Two rifle shots rang out in quick succession and Wild heard the hum of a bullet as it sped by his ear.

But as he turned and looked at the ranchman he saw him falling from the back of his horse.

CHAPTER VII.

SPIKER FAILS, AND THEN DIES.

The seven villainous horse thieves rode pretty hard, for they had made up their minds to try and abduct the girls Young Wild West had with him in his party, and this meant that they must reach the vicinity of Dod's Ranch as soon as possible.

But they managed to talk over their plans, in spite of the speed they were putting their horses to, as they rode close in a bunch.

The trail they had brought the stolen horses over was one that was used a great deal, and which about ended at Belcher's, where they belonged.

Though this would make it a little difficult for anyone to follow them, they all knew that it was quite likely that Young Wild West and his partners would find the fresh tracks of the stolen horses.

One thing Oxley had not told his friends, and that was that he had given the young deadshot the information that the gang was staying at Belcher's.

If Don Harley and the rest had known this they might not have felt so easy.

Of course they knew very well that if they were permitted to, our hero and his partners would come to the ranch, but they need not know that the horse thieves worked there, even if they did.

Harley was of the opinion that if he could get the three girls in his power, and be able to take them to Belcher's without being discovered, no one would think of looking for them there.

This looked rather plausible, since, as has been stated, Belcher bore a very good reputation.

It was just about twenty-two miles to Dod's Ranch, and the trail was, for the most part, smooth and without many hills.

In some places it ran right close to the river, while steep banks reared themselves back of it, with patches of timber here and there.

The horse thieves knew the trail well, and they figured that an ambushade could be easily arranged.

"Young Wild West an' his pards must never reach Belcher's, boys," Don Harley declared, shaking his head and clenching his teeth. "That wouldn't do, fur if he got that far he might win out. He's got ter be downed afore he gits halfway, an' that's all there is ter it. We'll ride along about halfway, an' then we'll lay in wait fur 'em. I feel purty sartin that he'll come. He told Oxley he would, an' most likely he meant it."

"Oh, he sartinly meant it!" Oxley hastened to say. "Don't make no mistake on that! Ther young galoot will come all right. He's goin' ter git yer all, he said, unless yer was smart enough ter light out so he couldn't find yer. He hates horse thieves, yer know."

"Well, I'll bet he don't hate me half as bad as I do him," and the leader shrugged his shoulders and looked very ugly. "He would have shot me dead when he seen me settin' in ther boat last night if he did. You kin bet that I'll never give him ther chance he give ter me, boys!"

"Sartin yer won't, Don," Hungry spoke up. "Say, did any of you fellers bring along anything ter eat?"

"Never mind anything ter eat, Hungry," retorted Harley. "You think a blamed sight more of your stomach than yer do of your life, I reckon. Jest wait till we git to Dod's; then you'll have all yer want ter eat, most likely."

"Maybe it'll be lead, too. Them gals knows how ter shoot purty well, I reckon," ventured Oxley.

"Well, we mustn't do anything ter make 'em shoot, not until we've got 'em so they can't shoot," said Harley. "But don't worry about ther gals shootin'. I reckon we kin fool 'em out of ther notion."

"How many of us is goin' to ther ranch ter git ther gals, Don?" asked one of the others.

"Well, I've thought it over, an' I reckon three will be enough ter do that job. We'll need four ter pop over Young Wild West an' his pards, I reckon."

"Which gang are you goin' ter be in?" queried Spiker, who was a sort of lieutenant to the leader of the horse thieves.

"I don't know yet. That's what's puzzlin' me. I want ter be in both, but there ain't no chance of that, of course. I ought ter be on hand when Young Wild West is tackled, an' I ought ter be at ther ranch ter take charge of them gals."

"Well, I'll tell yer, Don. It are most likely you'll put me in charge of ther boys you don't go with yourself, an' I'll tell yer that I don't take so very much stock in both-erin' with females. S'pose you go to ther ranch an' 'tend to ther gals, an' I hide an' wait fur Young Wild West an' his pards? I'm jest about as anxious ter fix 'em as you are, an' I reckon I kin make Oxley an' Hungry do a little

better shootin' than they did ther last time they tried it."

"Blamed if that ain't a good idea, Spiker! I'll let it go that way. You an' Oxley an' Hungry an' Scroggs kin lay fur ther boy an' his pards, an' ther rest of us will go on to ther house an' git ther gals. It might be that we'll have ther most of ther fightin' ter do, after all, since Dod has got a few men there, an' they might be right on hand when we git there."

"Or they might be out lookin' fur ther horses they lost last night," said one of the villains, with a chuckle.

"Well, it's bound ter be one way or the other. How about it, boys? Is everybody satisfied with ther arrangement?"

"Yes!" came the reply from all hands.

Then Spiker got with the three men he was going to be in charge of and gave them a lot of instructions.

Harley talked to the others, too, and this was kept up as they rode along.

Mile after mile was covered and at length they reached the spot they thought was the advisable one to wait for Young Wild West and his partners at.

They had made just about twelve miles, and the rocks and trees were plentiful there, which made it a place just suited for an ambush.

"Well, Spiker, here's where we part for a while, I reckon," said Don Harley, as he turned to his lieutenant. "I only hope you'll have as good luck as I do. I feel it in my bones that I'm goin' ter win in this game."

"I hope yer do, Don," was the reply. "You kin bet that I'll do my level best ter git ther boy an' his pards, if they only come along this way."

"Oh, they'll come all right. You've got quite an easy thing ter do, when yer come ter think of it. All you've got ter do is lay an' wait fur 'em. When they git jest where yer want 'em yer shoot 'em, that's all."

"It does seem as though it would be mighty easy," spoke up Hungry. "But we thought that same thing last night. We might git flipped up ag'in."

"Yer don't want ter do that. If yer don't hit one of them when yer fire ther first time jest keep right on shootin' till yer do. You'll have ther chance ter keep out of sight of them, anyhow. They won't be able ter plug yer."

"Oh, we'll do it, all right!" Spiker retorted, nodding as though there could be no doubt about it.

"Of course we will," added Oxley, who, in spite of what he had said to our hero, was just as anxious as ever to be revenged.

After a little further talk Don Harley and his two picked men struck out to the right, so they might swing around and reach Dod's Ranch without being seen by anyone who might be coming along the trail.

The country was admirably adapted for this, as there was a long, wooded ridge that ran parallel with the river for several miles.

As soon as they were out of sight the four left behind led their horses up a slope until they were about a hundred feet from the trail.

"Yer see that dead tree, boys," said Spiker. "Well, we'll wait until they come along by that, an' then we'll open up our game. Oxley an' Hungry has got ther two

sitting posture. "Whattée mattee with um nicee ledskin woman?"

As her head had been inside the dark closet when the powder was ignited the glare had been more pronounced than it would have if she had been out in the light that came from the windows and doorway of the kitchen.

The woman actually thought that the house was on fire, but she was so frightened and surprised that she could not utter a word just then.

Hop quickly produced a small flask of whisky, and removing the cork, placed it to her lips.

The squaw was not so badly frightened that she did not know the odor of whisky, and she quickly took a good swallow.

This had the effect of reviving her, and looking at the Chinaman in a frightened way, she said:

"What was that, Mister Chineé? That must be very queer tobaccer you gave me."

"Velly stlange," declared Hop, shaking his head. "Maybe me makee lillee mistakee and putee some powder in um pipe. If me do lat me no knowee when me do it. Me velly goodee Chineé, so be, and me no play um tick on um nicee lookee ledskin woman. Me likee kissee you; len evelytling be allee light."

But Tinkling Bell would have nothing of this, for she was what might be called a man-hater.

"You keep away or I'll scratch out your eyes!" she cried, fiercely. "I don't want you to kiss me."

"Allee light; me no kissee you, len."

Then Hop went and sat down, just as though nothing had happened at all.

Mrs. Dod and her daughter were so busy talking to Arietta, Anna and Eloise in another room that they did not hear anything wrong in the kitchen.

When Hop found that no one came there to interfere with him he proceeded to have some more fun with Tinkling Bell.

But just then his brother Wing came around to the back door and peered in.

The cook was very fond of a drink of milk occasionally, and it had occurred to him that the kitchen was the place to get it.

"Comee light in, my blother," said Hop, smiling at him in a way that told Wing he had better look out for him.

Hop's brother knew very well that when that smile appeared there was something in the mind of the one who gave it that meant fun.

"Lat allee light, my blother," he answered. "Me no wantee you to bothee with me, allee samee. Me mindee my own business, so be; you allee samee mindee your own business."

Tinkling Bell now arose to her feet, and taking up the pipe, which she had dropped to the floor, she examined it closely.

Beyond the fact that the powder had discolored it somewhat, the pipe was all right, so she placed it back upon the shelf, no doubt resolving never to smoke again while she was doing her work in the kitchen.

She was a little angry now, and looking at the Chinaman fiercely, she exclaimed:

"You get out of here, both of you. If you don't I'll

call ther missus. I want to git my work done, an' I can't be bothered with any heathen Chinese sellers."

"Allee light," answered Hop, smiling in his cheerful way. "You givee my blother lillee dlink of milk, and len we allee samee go outee."

"Well, I'll do that. We have got plenty of milk, and if you will go out, as you say you will, I'll give you a drink."

Wing soon got the milk, but before he could place the cup to his lips Hop touched him on the arm and exclaimed:

"Lookee out lere, my blother! See um velly bigee snakee."

As Wing turned around to look, Hop dropped nearly a handful of salt in the cup.

Then he broke into a laugh and observed:

"My blother allee samee velly muchee 'flaid, so be. Me wantee makee him lillee bit scared, lat allee."

"Drink ther milk, an' git out of here," spoke up Tinkling Bell, sharply. "If you don't I'll call ther missus right away."

Hop saw there was no chance to have any more fun with her, so he walked slowly outside.

Then Wing put the cup to his lips and swallowed half it contained before he realized that there was anything wrong with it.

He tasted the salt, and uttering a yell he dropped the cup to the floor.

"Whattée mattee?" he gasped, the tears starting to his eyes. "Um woman allee samee tly to poison me."

But it was no place for him there, for the combination of milk and salt had made him deathly sick, and grasping his stomach with both hands he bolted outside.

Hop watched him for a few minutes, enjoying his agony greatly, and then he walked around to the front of the house.

He found the girls just coming out upon the porch, as they wished to give the mistress of the house a chance to go ahead with her preparations for the noonday meal.

"What have you been doing now, Hop?" Arietta asked as she noticed the smile that still lingered upon the Celestial's yellow face. "You have been up to something. I'll wager."

Hop shook his head, changing his expression to one of absolute innocence.

"Me no do anytling, Misse Alietta," he declared. "Me velly goodee Chineé, so be."

But Arietta did not believe him, so she went around to the kitchen and quickly learned what had happened there, for the squaw was busy telling the mistress about it when she got there.

The ranchman's wife could not help laughing when she heard the whole story, and turning to Arietta, she said:

"That must be a mighty funny Chineé you have got working for you."

"Yes, that's right," was the reply. "He is always playing some kind of a trick. But he's a faithful fellow, for all that, and Wild would not discharge him for anything. He has gone a little too far in this, however, and I think I'll punish him a little."

"How are you going to do that?" and Mrs. Dod looked at her in surprise.

"I'll show you. Just come around to the front of the house."

They all went around, even to Tinkling Bell and Wing, who had recovered sufficiently to go and see his brother get punished for what he had done to him.

Hop was sitting on the porch, puffing away at his cigar, just as though nothing had happened to disturb anyone in the vicinity.

Before he knew what was going to happen Arietta drew a revolver, and taking quick aim at the cigar, shot it from his mouth.

"Hip hi!" yelled the surprised Chinaman, as he jumped to his feet.

His queue flew up in the air, and before it came down Arietta fired again, clipping about an inch from the end.

She knew this would really punish him, for a Chinaman always prizes his queue.

"That's for going into the kitchen and meddling with things that don't concern you, Hop," she said, coolly. "Now then, if you don't behave yourself I'll take another piece from your pig-tail. You hear what I say?"

"Me hear, Misse Alietta," and the Chinaman showed that he was very much afraid that she would take the notion to fire again.

He had had enough of it now, and for the next half hour he remained perfectly silent, even forgetting to light another cigar.

A little later he got up and took a walk toward a clump of trees that was a short distance from the ranch.

There was a spring of water here, and when he saw it he concluded that he would take a drink.

As he turned for the spring he happened to look off to the right, and then it was that he saw three horsemen riding swiftly in the direction of the house.

Hop had seen the cowboys who went along with the ranchman and Wild, and a single glance told him that the three were not they.

There was something about the looks of the men that told him that they were not friends to those at the ranch, so he quickly changed his mind about getting the drink and ran back to the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ABDUCTION.

Arietta, Anna and Eloise were sitting on the porch when Hop ran up in an excited way.

"Allee samee thlee bad Melican mans come!" he exclaimed. "Bettee lookee outee! Me feel velly sure ley no goodee, so be."

"How do you know they are bad men?" asked Arietta. "Did you ever see them before?"

"Me no see um before; but me tlink ley velly muchee bad, by um lookee, Missy Alietta."

The ranchman's daughter came out just then.

"See if you know the three horsemen who are coming here, will you, Carrie?" Arietta asked.

"Why, yes," was the reply. "Is anyone coming?"

Just then the three men appeared around the clump of trees.

"Oh!" said the girl, quickly. "They are cowboys from Belcher's. They often come here."

The girls and Hop did not know that Belcher was the

name of the ranchman the horse thieves stayed with, so they at once made up their minds that the three visitors were all right.

It happened that Don Harley—for it was he and his chosen companions—had shaved himself early that morning, so Arietta did not recognize him as the leader of the seven men, who had come ashore from the boat the night before.

But she was not thinking of him just then, or she would have probably soon discovered who he was.

The others she had not taken much notice of, and not thinking that there was anything wrong about them, after hearing the ranchman's daughter speak well of them, she did nothing but sit there.

The three villains rode up, and Don Harley tipped his hat and greeted "Miss Carrie," as he called her, pleasantly.

Then, without hardly looking at the guests there, he said:

"Where's your father?"

"He went off after horse thieves nearly two hours ago," replied the girl.

"What!"

The villain affected great surprise.

"Yes. Dad lost twelve of the best horses he had for sale last night, and he is on the trail of the thieves. He has got Young Wild West and his pards with him, so I guess he'll catch them this time."

"I hope he does catch them. Our boss has been losing cattle right along for the past month, and it may be that it is the same gang that is doin' it."

"Quite likely it is."

"Well, I wanted to see your father real bad. Ain't there none of ther men folks around?"

"Not a one. The only ones in that line just now are Young Wild West's two Chinamen."

"Oh! that is too bad."

Then Harley turned to his companions and talked in low tones.

Arietta was watching all three of them now, for there was something that was suspicious about them, she was beginning to think, even though Carrie Dod regarded them as being all right.

The more the girl looked at the three, the more it occurred to her that she had seen them somewhere before.

All four of the girls were on the porch, as we have said. The ranchman's daughter was the only one standing up. Suddenly the three villains drew their revolvers.

"I want you gals ter keep right still!" exclaimed Don Harley. "If either of yer cries out there'll be female blood spilled in a jiffy! We come here ter rob ther place!"

Even though she had been suspicious of them, Arietta was taken by surprise when the men drew their guns.

Harley and his men were well prepared, and with great quickness they threw ropes about all four of the girls.

Then, while his men covered them, using all sorts of threats at the same time, he proceeded to tie their hands behind them.

Hop was standing there, but an eye was kept on him, too.

But as the girls were being tied he managed to slip around the corner of the house.

"Go an' git another horse, one of you," said Harley, who was very cool, considering the outrage he was committing. "If yer find that them heathens interfere, shoot 'em, jest ther same as yer would if they was dogs."

"You will suffer for this!" cried Arietta, her eyes blazing with anger, for she had now fully recovered herself. "Wait till Young Wild West catches you."

"I reckon he's dead by this time, gal," replied Harley, with a laugh. "I left four men waitin' fur him ter come along. They must have got him by this time, I reckon. Don't worry about Young Wild West ever catchin' us! He'll never catch anyone ag'in. You jest take it easy, an' then you'll be treated right, do yer hear?"

At that moment Carrie Dod began screaming with all her might.

One of the villains pressed the muzzle of a revolver against her lips, and then she fell in a faint.

The girl's mother and the hired woman came rushing from the kitchen in alarm.

They were followed by Wing, who had been dozing off the effects of his recent illness under a tree in the rear of the house.

Neither of the three were aware that the villains were there until they saw them.

They were cowed into submission in short order.

But where Hop was just then no one knew.

The clever Chinaman had disappeared.

One of the villains with Harley soon brought a horse, saddled and bridled ready to go away with.

"Come ter think of it, boys," said the leader, scratching his head, "I reckon we might as well git some more horses an' tie ther gals on 'em. We kin always use ther extra horses we git—you know that."

"That's right, Don," answered the man who had brought the horse. "There's jest four more there. Are yer goin' ter take all ther gals?"

"Yes, we might as well, while we're at it. We don't want ther old lady an' ther squaw, so we'll leave 'em here ter wait till Dod comes back—if he ever does come back. Ha, ha, ha!"

The ranchman's wife and the squaw had been forced to sit up on the bench that was on the porch.

Carrie lay where she had fallen in a faint.

Arietta, Anna and Eloise were standing, their hands secured behind them, unable to do a thing.

Harley kept a revolver in his hand all the time, and they felt that he might shoot if they tried to get away.

Arietta had been doing a lot of thinking since she recovered from the surprise the act of the villain had given her.

She had been placed in similar positions several times before, so it was really nothing new to her.

She now made up her mind that the only way to beat the villains was by outwitting them.

"Keep cool," she said to Anna and Eloise. "The scoundrels have got all the best of it now, but our turn will come. Don't imagine that Wild has been killed or caught by them. They are not capable of doing anything like that. That they are nothing but cowards has already been proved. They are the same men who came up the river in the boat last night. I know them now. The leader has shaved off his beard, that's all."

"Yer seem ter knew a lot, gal," Harley answered, a grin showing on his ugly visage. "Well, I like gals that's smart. You'll jest suit me fur a wife, blamed if yer won't. I'll have a tough job breakin' yer in, but I'll enjoy doin' it, jest ther same."

The look he bestowed upon the helpless girl caused a sudden fear to come over her.

But this was quickly thrust aside, for Arietta was too brave and determined to give way to a fear.

The man who remained with his leader now picked up the unconscious ranch girl, and the moment he did so she came to.

"Don't be frightened, Carrie," called out Arietta, when she saw the look of terror in the girl's eyes. "The scoundrels dare not hurt us. We won't be in their power very long. Wild and his partners will soon save us."

Carrie burst into tears at this, and then she gradually began to grow better.

The tears were a relief to her.

The ranch girl was soon tied to the horse, so she could not slip off, and when that was done the other villain appeared with four more horses.

They only had halters on them, for it happened that there were no bridles to be found, or saddles, either.

But this made little difference to Harley and his pards.

The girls were used to riding, and if they went bareback as far as Belcher's it would not inconvenience them a great deal.

In spite of their hottest protests, Arietta, Anna and Eloise were lifted upon the horses and securely tied there.

Wing Wah, his face pale with fear, watched the work as it went on.

He did not make a word of protest, but Mrs. Dod and the squaw pleaded with the villains to let the girls stay at the house.

But they were only laughed at, and in a few minutes they were ready to leave.

But Harley did not mean to go until he had obtained what money there was in the house, however.

"Jest keep an eye on ther winmin till I take a look through ther house," he said, as he started for the door. "I want ter find that other Chinee."

The villain was not long in finding the ranchman's money.

But he saw nothing of Hop, and so made up his mind that the heathen was hiding somewhere in terror.

Out he came, and before mounting his horse he nodded to Mrs. Dod and Tinkling Bell and said:

"Now then, we're goin' ter strike out fur a nice cave we've got about fifteen miles from here. Your friends won't never find us, so there ain't no use in lookin'. One of my pards is a minister, so he'll hitch up ther gals ter four of us in ther regular way. It'll be done in proper shape, never fear, so yer don't need ter worry about it. Some time your darter will come over ter see yer, an' she'll bring her husband with her. If yer move from where you're settin' afore we git out of sight we'll come back an' kill yer, an' then set fire to ther house! Heathen, you hear that! It means you, too!"

"Allee light; me no movee, so be," Wing answered.

making out that he was more frightened than he really was.

The next minute the three villains set out with their prisoners.

Don Harley chose the trail to go by, instead of the way they had fled, and were being pursued.

Anyhow, he felt that it was best to get to Belcher's as soon as possible, for he was quite certain they would be safe there.

Wing and the two women on the porch saw which way they went, but that did not mean much.

They might turn at any time and pursue some other course.

It was not long after they had gone when Hop came out of the house and joined the three on the porch.

"Whattée mattee?" he asked, coolly.

"My blother allee samee go hidee," retorted Wing, showing his disgust.

"Lat allee light," was the bland reply. "Me no wantee gittee shottee, so be. Me velly smartee Chinee, and me puttee um big loll of counterfittee money in um bag, and len me puttee in um dlawer. Um bad horse thief allee samee takee, and he think he gottee um boss' money, so be. Me allee samee foolee him velly muchee nicee. He tink he gottee 'boutee two thlousand dollee, when he no gottee no money, allee samee. Me velly smartee Chinee! Now me go and savee um girls, so be."

Mrs. Dod had been completely overcome, but as she heard the Chinaman talking in this way her hopes arose as if by magic.

"Go an' save 'em!" she cried. "You are very smart, an' I believe you are. Go an' save 'em."

Hop now went out to the stable.

The fact was that the clever Celestial had been watching the man when he took the horses.

The villainous thief had not gone to the place where the horses belonging to our hero's party had been placed, but had simply took possession of what he could find that belonged to the ranch.

Hop found the horses just as they had been left.

He quickly saddled his piebald cayuse.

This animal was a good one, and had been trained by Hop to do many things that the average steed can not do.

Hop was not long in getting ready, and then he hit the trail, resolving to save the girls, and thus put another feather in his cap.

CHAPTER X.

AT BELCHER'S RANCH.

On went the three horse thieves, the horses the girls were tied to following them willingly.

Don Harley kept right on the regular trail, and the ground was covered rapidly.

Of course they could not make as much speed as they would have if they had not been hampered with the horses they were leading, but still they went along at a good gait.

Arietta did her best to quiet the fears of her companions in distress, and before they had covered two miles she had them all in a very hopeful state of mind.

The worst one of the lot was Carrie Dod.

Though she had lived on a ranch all her life, this was

the first time she had ever been subjected to such treatment.

But when she saw how brave Arietta was she decided to make the best of it, and wait until someone came to save them.

Arietta had kept promising that Young Wild West and his partners would surely do this, and so the ranch girl began to believe it.

Mile after mile was covered, and at length they reached the spot where Harley and his two companions had left the rest of the horse thieves.

There was nothing to be seen of any of them now, so the leader of the gang could not help believing that it was more than likely that the four had succeeded in killing Young Wild West and his partners.

He would have halted and looked around for some signs of this, but he felt that they had not the time to spare.

What he wanted to do was to get to Belcher's as quickly as possible.

Knowing that Belcher would not return to the ranch for some days yet, he figured on having time to make preparations to remove for some other part of the country, and take the girls with them.

The villains had gone pretty deep now, and they all seemed to be of the opinion that they might as well go further.

Harley kept impressing this upon the minds of his two companions as they rode along, he declaring that they could easily find a parson who would marry four of the gang to the captive girls, whether the girls wanted it or not.

Past the blasted tree they rode, and then on to the ranch they were heading for.

In a little while this came in sight, and then Don Harley gave vent to a muffled cheer, which his two companions joined in.

"I reckon we're all right now, boys," he observed, with a chuckle. "No one won't never think of lookin' here for ther gals. Yer heard what I said ter Dod's wife, didn't yer?"

"Yes, an' that will fool 'em, all right," answered one of them. "Yer said we had a cave that was about fifteen miles away, and that no one could ever find us there. They'll be huntin' for that cave, I reckon."

The horse thief laughed as he said this.

He had no knowledge of any such cave, and that was probably the reason it appealed to him as being rather humorous.

Reaching the ranch, the villains quickly dismounted, and then, one by one, the girls were taken from the backs of the horses and forced to enter the house.

Arietta was the last one to be taken inside, and when she appeared before them her friends in distress brightened up a little.

The ranch house was a rather tumble-down affair, though the rooms in it were in fairly good condition.

Harley quickly selected one of the rooms as the temporary residence of the girls.

At his order the two windows it contained were nailed up, so there could be no possible chance for the prisoners to make their escape.

Then he made a search of them to see if they had any weapons upon them.

It happened that only Arietta was armed, Anna and Eloise having left their weapons inside the house when they came out upon the porch.

Young Wild West's sweetheart was quickly relieved of the revolver and hunting knife that hung from her belt, but the villain never once thought that she might have another revolver concealed upon her person.

But she did, nevertheless.

Arietta always carried a small silver-plated six-shooter under her bodice.

This had been given her as a present on a birthday some two or three years previous, and Young Wild West was the one who had made the gift.

Many times this little weapon had stood the girl in good stead, and hence she always carried it concealed.

Having satisfied himself that the girls had nothing with them that could do any harm, Harley drew his hunting knife from the sheath and severed the ropes that held their hands behind them.

"There!" he exclaimed, "I reckon you kin make yourselves at home now, gals. Ther quicker you make up your minds to do as we want yer ter do the better it will be for everybody concerned. There ain't no use in yer thinkin' that Young Wild West an' his pards will ever come ter take yer away from us. They're dead, jest as sure as anything. As I told yer afore I left four good men ter lay in ambush for him when they came along, an' you kin bet your life that they done ther job. Yer might as well make up your minds ter fergit that there ever was sich a galoot as Young Wild West. You're young yet, and most likely you'll soon learn to think well of them what thinks well of you jest now."

"You say that very easily," retorted Arietta, not showing the least sign of fear, for she now felt that there was surely going to be a chance to get the best of the ruffians. "If you think that way, all right. But I don't think that way. You and your villainous companions are already marked for death. I tell you this because I know just what I'm talking about. You say that you left four men to lie in ambush for Young Wild West and his partners. You know as well as I do that none of your men have got enough sand in them to put up a fight with Young Wild West. Why, you all fear him so much that you would be ready to run the moment you saw him coming."

The words cut the villain deeply, but he put up a bluff, and retorted:

"I don't blame yer for stickin' up for ther boy, 'cause I 'spose yer think a whole lot of him. But you'll soon forgit all about him. Jest take a look at me now. I'm a putty young man yet, an' I reckon I ain't so very bad lookin', am I?"

Arietta laughed at this remark.

"You don't think I could ever take a fancy to you, do you?" she asked, just as coolly as though no such thing as danger threatened her.

"Well, I don't know why yer couldn't," and the leader of the horse thieves threw out his chest and brushed back his hair, as though he was trying to make himself look more presentable. "But I won't force myself on you,

not until I git ther dominie what's goin' ter tie ther knot. As soon as ther rest of my men comes back, I'm goin' ter send right away for him. I know where to git one, an' he'll come in a hurry, 'cause he'll think there's some money in it. There will be some money in it, too, if he does ther job right, an' don't squeal 'cause you gals don't want ter marry. If he does squeal, an' don't want ter do it, we'll make him do it, anyhow. Then instead of payin' him in money we'll give him lead an' bury him out somewhere where no one will ever find the grave. We're in this thing for fair, an' you kin bet your life that we're goin' ter do it right."

The words of the villain struck fear to the hearts of Arietta's companions, but the girl herself did not mind them, any further than that they angered her.

Don Harley would have lingered longer in the room if one of his men had not called out just then that someone was coming toward the ranch.

Out he went, being careful to bar the door securely as he left.

As he got outside he saw three horsemen riding at a furious pace toward the house.

One glance at them told him that they were Hungry, Oxley and Scroggs.

The face of the villain turned white and red alternately. He wondered whether or not they had been successful. But where was Spiker?

That was the question he asked himself.

The question was soon answered, however, for the three men dashed up to the door and quickly dismounted.

"We had hard luck, Don," said Oxley, whose face was as pale as a sheet. "We waited for 'em ter come, and when Young Wild West an' Bill Dod came ridin' ahead of ther rest me an' Hungry fired at 'em. Hungry dropped Dod, but I missed Young Wild West. Then he shot an' killed Spiker. Ther rest of us got away an' took your trail. We got pretty near Dod's ranch when from a hill we happened ter see you ridin' along the regular trail with ther gals. Then we turned and made a bee-line for ther ranch, an' here we are."

For the space of half a minute the leader of the horse thieves was unable to speak. Then he motioned the men to come inside the house.

"I reckon this is mighty bad work," he said, after a pause. "Jest what we're goin' ter do about it, I don't know."

"Well, there's one thing about it, Don," spoke up Hungry. "I reckon we throwed ther galoots off our trail. They don't know that we come here, so maybe we'll be all right for a while, anyhow."

Oxley winced at this, for he remembered of having told our hero that the headquarters of the horse thieves was at Belcher's.

He did not mean to let his companions know of this, however, so he put on a bold front and tried to make it appear that they would be perfectly safe at the ranch.

"Yer had four gals with yer, didn't yer?" asked Scroggs, looking at the leader. "I didn't have much of a chance ter see 'em when we was back on ther hill, for it was about two miles away from us, but I thought I seen four gals tied on ther horses yer was leadin'."

"Yes, we brought Dod's daughter along, too. Harley

answered. "She was right there on the porch with ther other three, so I reckoned that we had better fetch her along, too. I've made up my mind ter marry one of ther gals, which is Young Wild West's sweetheart. I did allow that I was goin' ter send for a parson right away as soon as you fellers come back, but I hardly think it would be safe ter do it jest now. If them galoots should happen ter come here, there will be a hard fight on hand. But we'll have ther best end of it, as they won't dare ter shoot through ther windows of the house for fear of hittin' ther gals. Boys, there's only one thing for us to do now, and that's to put up a fight that will win. Every galoot what comes here, if any does come here, has got ter be shot down so he can't tell no tales. Yer all hear what I say, don't yer?"

An affirmative answer came from the five, though it was uttered in a rather feeble way.

The three men who had been the last to reach the house now went out and put away their horses.

Then they came back, and found their companions waiting in a room that adjoined the one where the girls were held prisoners.

"Can't we have a look at ther gals, Don?" asked Oxley, who was really acting as though he had less fear than the rest.

"I reckon yer kin," was the reply. "Come on."

The villainous leader unbarred the door, and then all six of them entered the room.

There sat the girls apparently but little concerned.

The villains looked the girls over, just as though they were some horses that were offered for sale, or something of the kind.

They did not seem to regard them as helpless human beings at all.

Having been scoundrels for the greater part of their lives, and then of a very ignorant sort, they could hardly have been called men, in any sense of the word, save that they were of the type and were able to think and speak.

"A nice lookin' lot, I will say," ventured Scroggs, grinning in a way that was hideous to the girls. "Which one am I goin' ter git for a wife, Don?"

"That's somethin' I can't tell yer," was the reply. "There's six of us an' only four of ther gals. Two has got ter git left."

"Yes, that's so," and Scroggs shook his head and looked solemn.

"Of course, me being the leader, I'm ter have my choice. Ther rest of yer will have ter fight it out among yourselves. But ther best way ter do would be ter draw lots, I s'pose."

"Well, if we do that I don't know why you shouldn't come in ther game with us, too," and Scroggs shook his head rather doggedly. "Jest 'cause you're ther leader don't say that yer should have any better chance in this game than ther rest of us."

The others nodded approvingly at this.

"That's right," spoke up Arietta. "Make him draw lots with you. I'm sure you're as good as he is."

"You shet up, gal!" cried Harley, almost fiercely. "You're goin' ter be my wife, an' I don't care who says anything different."

Arietta realized that there was a chance to start a row

between the villains, and she made up her mind to do all she could to bring it about.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG WILD WEST SETS A TRAP.

Cheyenne Charlie, who was riding a little in advance of Jim Dart and the cowboys, saw the ranchman fall from his horse as the two shots rang out, and he knew right away that the horse thieves were there.

"Come on, boys!" he shouted. "I reckon there's trouble."

They had been riding hard, in order to witness the finish of the race, for it was just as exciting as though it had been for money, or a prize.

Their horses could not go any faster, but they soon reached the spot and found Dod sitting on the ground, with Wild bending over him.

Our hero had hurried to the assistance of the ranchman as soon as the clatter of hoofs told him that the villains were fleeing.

He knew he had shot one of them, but he first must see how Dod was before he went to investigate.

The bullet had cut a streak of hair from the side of the man's head, but it was merely a scalp wound, after all.

It had been enough to temporarily stun him, but now he was virtually all right.

"What's the matter, Wild?" asked the scout, as he reined in his horse and dismounted.

"The horse thieves were waiting for us, Charlie," was the reply. "They fired two shots just as the race was finished. One of the bullets whizzed past my head and the other grazed Mr. Dod's head. He is mighty lucky that it did not go an inch to the left, too."

"That's right; I'm very thankful it didn't," spoke up the ranchman, as he felt of the wound. "I reckon I only lost a little skin an' some hair, that's all. Ther skull-bone might have been teched, but it's all there yet, anyhow."

Charlie lent a hand and the ranchman was soon ready to mount his horse again.

Jim and the cowboys were delighted to find that the wound was but a slight one, and they vowed that they would soon catch the scoundrels and punish them for it.

"Ther sorrel won the race, boys," said Dod, as he looked and saw our hero on the back of his horse again. "My! but that was ther greatest race I was ever in! I thought my horse was a good one, an' I think so yet. But ther sorrel is ther best beast, an' I'm ready ter stand by it."

"Your horse is certainly a good one," Jim Dart answered. "But I never once doubted that Spitfire would beat him. There isn't a horse alive that can hold a gait with him, you know."

"It seems that way. I didn't believe it a little while ago, but I do now."

Wild had gone up the hill now, and he was not long in finding the body of Spiker.

The villain had just breathed his last, so there was nothing to keep the boy there.

He promptly took the trail of the other three horse thieves and called out for his companions to come on.

All the horses were about winded, so they went at a rather slower pace.

The trail was a plain one, however, so there was no trouble in finding it.

As the three had started in the same direction taken by their leader and the two with him, the tracks of all the horses were there, and it was only natural that our hero and his partners should think that they had all left the spot at the same time.

Dod continued to improve in feelings, and though the wound hurt him somewhat, he was just as anxious to overtake the horse thieves as any of the rest.

On they went, and when the horses got rested a little they put them at a faster gait.

But as they drew nearer the ranch they had left to find the horse thieves it dawned upon our hero's mind that the villains might be up to something worse than stealing horses.

Suppose they had learned that there was no one at the ranch house but Mrs. Dod and the girls?

As this thought struck him he became rather uneasy.

"Boys," said he to Charlie and Jim, "I reckon Don Harley has gone to the ranch."

"What would he dare do that far?" the scout queried, showing surprise.

"Well, there was no one there to protect the girls, you know. It might be that they know this. They no doubt saw you all coming, and they must have recognized the cowboys."

"By jingo!" exclaimed Jim. "I'll bet you are right, Wild. The galoots have turned back to the ranch, probably thinking we will go in the other direction to look for them. If they have done this I suppose the girls are in trouble now."

"Well, we'll make straight for the ranch and soon find out. I reckon that's the best way."

They left the trail and headed straight for the ranch.

It was not so very long before they came in sight of it.

There seemed to be nothing wrong there, but as they got within half a mile of the house they saw one of the Chinamen come out and wave to them, as though he wanted them to hurry.

Then they did hurry, and as they rode up to the porch out came Mrs. Dod and her woman servant.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the ranchman's wife. "Somethin' awful has happened. The girls have been took away by Don Harley. Oh! Oh!"

Then she saw the bandaged head of her husband, and the next minute she was at his side.

"Take it easy, gal," said Dod, trying his best to appear calm. "I ain't hurt none. It was only a flesh wound that I got. Jest keep a little cool an' tell us what has happened. Young Wild West and his pards will soon straighten it out, yer kin bet on that."

Then the woman managed to tell all that had taken place.

Wing and the squaw corroborated everything she said, so there was no doubt about it.

But the fact that the four girls were missing from the ranch was quite enough, without being told anything.

"Come on," said the young deadshot, when he had learned all he desired to know just then. "As far as the

villains going to a cave fifteen miles away from here is concerned, I don't believe a word of it. They have headed for the ranch that galoot we had a prisoner last night told us about. There is where we will head for, boys."

"That's right, Wild!" cried Charlie. "Jest let me set eyes on them horse thieves, an' somethin' will happen. I'll drop 'em jest as fast as my finger kin pull the trigger."

"You had better remain here with your wife, Mr. Dod," advised the dashing young deadshot, as he saw the ranchman getting ready to go with them. "She will need you, I reckon."

"All right, if you say so, I'll stay," was the reply.

"I do say so. Don't worry about your daughter. We'll find her and bring her back, as well as the stolen horses. You can depend on what I say."

Then our hero rode off, his partners and the three cowboys following.

"If Hop went after them he most likely will trail them to the place where they went," said Jim Dart, as he got alongside our hero, when they were half a mile from the house.

"That's right, Jim. Hop knows a few things, and you can bet that he will follow them. All we have got to do is to keep right on the trail, I reckon. It is galling to think that we were probably less than a mile away from the galoots who were riding along with the girls. But never mind; we'll find them, and then there will be a mighty hot time, I reckon."

The eyes of the dashing young deadshot flashed as he said this, and Jim knew what that meant.

Only pausing to give their steeds a breathing spell when it was absolutely necessary, they kept on, and at length the spot where the race had ended, and the ranchman had been wounded, was reached.

Wild dismounted here, and finding that the body of the man he had shot was still where it had fallen, decided that the horse thieves had not taken the time or trouble to recover it.

The cowboys informed him that the trail led straight to Belcher's ranch, but they declared that they hardly thought Belcher would allow anything in the line of crooked work.

"That's all right," our hero answered. "Belcher may be all right, but his men are not. Suppose they have killed him and taken possession of his place?"

"Well, that might be," one of the cowboys admitted, and the others agreed with him.

There was a good eleven miles to cover yet, so they went right at it.

After what seemed to be a very long time they came in sight of the dilapidated buildings of the ranch through the thin strip of timber that lay between.

Half a mile the other side of the timber was their destination, so the cowboys informed our hero and his partners.

As they reached the timber they suddenly came upon a horse that was tied to a tree.

It was Hop's piebald cayuse.

"There!" exclaimed Wild, as he brought his horse to a halt. "I'll wager that our clever Chinaman is right there

at the house now, boys! Hop is all right, and no mistake!"

"You're right on that, Wild. Ther heathen has left his horse here an' gone ahead on foot. He's follered 'em here all right. What are yer goin' ter do now?"

"I reckon we had better set a trap for the horse thieves, Charlie."

"How are yer goin' ter do it?"

"Well, the chances are that the galoots will leave the house and try to get away, if they see us coming. They are too cowardly to stay and put up a fight, I think. They will most likely ride away in a direction that is opposite to us, too, so if we can send the three cowboys around, so they can lie in wait for them, we might be able to drive them right into a trap."

"By jingo! That's right, Wild," spoke up Jim.

"We kin get around there without bein' seen from ther house, but it'll take about fifteen minutes ter do it," said one of the cowboys.

"Well, that don't matter. Go ahead and get around there. Wait in some place where you can watch them, if they leave the house. Then if they don't come your way exactly, get around so you will be able to head them off. We will be right behind to join in the fight, if there is any. But look out how you shoot if they have the girls with them."

The three cowboys nodded, and then rode off.

Wild and his partners waited until the fifteen minutes had elapsed, though Charlie acted as though he was on pins and needles, so to speak.

Then they rode through the timber strip and galloped straight for the house.

They got to within a quarter of a mile when a yell of defiance came to their ears.

The next minute they saw the horse thieves riding away, driving a number of horses ahead of them.

Don Harley was in the lead, and tied behind him was a girl!

The girl was Arietta!

"After them, boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West, and then as he noticed the scout was about to put his rifle to his shoulder, he quickly added:

"Wait, Charlie. I'll tell you when to fire."

"All right," was the reply. "But don't wait too long afore yer tell me."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Hop had no trouble in keeping upon the trail of the horse thieves.

He was able to proceed at a faster gait than they were riding at, since they were hampered by the horses they were leading.

After a while he found that it would be dangerous to get any closer to them, so he slackened his pace and kept on at a certain distance behind them.

He reached the timber strip near the ranch house while they were only halfway to the house, and dismounting, tied his horse to a tree and started out on foot.

What the clever Chinaman intended to do was to find just where the girls were going to be kept by the vil-

lains, and then go and find Young Wild West as quickly as possible.

There were bushes here and there, and relying on them to conceal him from view, Hop worked his way along toward the rear of the house.

Sometimes he ran and sometimes he was compelled to creep along close to the ground.

But at length the goal was reached, and crouching behind a pile of rubbish that was within a few feet of the back of the house, he waited until he could think of something to do.

After a while he heard horses approaching the house, and thinking that probably Wild and his partners were coming, he crept around to look.

But they were the three who had failed in their attempt to kill our hero, as the reader knows.

By going around that way Hop found an opportunity to get into the house.

There was a window open at the end opposite to the room the girls were in.

While the villains were talking, after they had put away their horses, Hop crawled through the window.

But he was still far from reaching the girls, however, for there was no chance to get into the other room.

As he looked around in the rather small room he had entered he saw there was a trap door overhead.

He gave a nod of satisfaction the moment he saw this, and then he looked for a means to get up to it.

The means was right there, for there was a ladder standing in a corner.

In less than a minute Hop had the ladder in position, and then without making any noise, he ascended and slid back the trap.

It was a little, low attic that he looked into, but he could see that it ran the whole length of the house.

There was no flooring in the attic, so he had to be very careful.

Soon he was right over the room the girls were in.

It was just then that the whole six of the horse thieves entered the room.

Hop could see all that took place, as well as hear.

Like Arietta, he saw there was to be trouble among the thieves.

No doubt there would have been if Don Harley had not realized the same thing, and given in to his companions.

"If yer want ter draw lots ter see which of ther four of us is goin' ter have ther gals I'll go in ther game with yer. By rights I oughter have my pick, but I ain't goin' ter make no hard feelin's. Now then, we'll take six matches and break ther heads off two of 'em. Ther four what's got ther heads on will be ther lucky matches. Scroggs, you fix up ther matches. I don't want ter do it, 'cause you might think I don't do it square. When you git 'em ready ther five of us will each take a match from your hand, and you'll have one left. Them that gits ther matches with ther heads on 'em will have ther gals. 's that all right?"

"You bet!" came the response, for all hands were pleased to think that he was going to act in a square way with them.

Hop was much interested as the drawing proceeded.

The matches were soon ready, and then the villains drew.

The result was that Oxley and Scroggs failed to win.

"Now then," said Don Harley, nodding at Arietta, "I reckon you're goin' ter be mine, anyhow. But we won't bother with yer jest now. We'll all take a little drink ter celebrate what's happened. Hungry, you go an' git a bottle of liquor an' some cups. We'll drink right here to the health of the gals an' ther ones that has been lucky enough ter win 'em for wives."

The villain called Hungry lost no time in leaving the room.

In a very short time he returned with a bottle and some tin cups.

Then all hands drank to the toast that the leader proposed, and when the cups were emptied they quickly filled them again.

Meanwhile the four girls sat close together, hoping that help would soon arrive.

In this way perhaps half an hour passed.

Then Don Harley took a walk outside.

He had barely looked around the corner of the house when he saw three horsemen galloping from the timber strip.

The villain gave a gasp of dismay, for he recognized them as Young Wild West and his two partners.

Almost terror-stricken, he ran back to the house, and exclaimed:

"Boys, I reckon we have got ter light out right away! Here comes Young Wild West an' his pards! Go an' git ther horses. Hurry up about it."

Three of them ran to obey without wasting a moment's time, while Hungry and Oxley stood as if transfixed.

But Harley quickly gulped down some of the whisky, and then as quick as a flash he pounced upon Arietta, catching her unawares.

"Tie her up, boys!" he cried, savagely. "I'm goin' ter take her with me, as well as ther horses we stole. Git a move on yer."

In less time than it takes to record it, Arietta was rendered helpless again.

Then up came the three horse thieves with the horses.

Carrying the girl from the house, Harley quickly mounted.

"Run her up behind me an' tie her to my back!" he ordered.

This was quickly done.

Then the rest of the villains mounted, and away they started from the house, overtaking the stolen horses that had been liberated but a couple of minutes before, and driving them on ahead.

Hop became so excited as he saw Arietta being carried from the house that he let his weight rest upon a portion of the ceiling that was anything but strong.

The result was that there was a crash, and down came the Chinaman right before the three girls, who had been left in the house by the villains.

"Oh, Hop!" cried the scout's wife, as she recognized him. "Arietta has just been carried away. Save her! Hurry up."

"Allee light Missy Anna," was the reply; and then the clever Chinaman darted out of the house.

Meanwhile the horse thieves were riding hard.

Young Wild West and his partners were making a short cut across a patch of sage-brush, but the villains were in hopes of reaching the woods.

They kept on, and they managed to get half a mile from the ranch house when they ran right upon the three waiting cowboys.

Crack, crack, crack!

Three shots rang out, and the result was that Hungry was hit hard and fell from the saddle.

A cry from the leader caused the horse thieves to turn to the left.

Then it was that something happened.

The villains were galloping along with the stolen horses, Arietta tied securely to the leader, when a yell sounded from the right.

Then out of the sage-brush came Young Wild West and his partners.

Don Harley uttered a cry of dismay.

"Hold on!" he yelled, throwing up his arms. "Don't shoot!"

But he was too late, for at that very moment Cheyenne Charlie's finger pressed the trigger, and he reeled and would have fallen had it not been for Arietta.

His companions knew their only chance was to shoot and kill their pursuers, and then began firing.

But in less time than it takes to record it the saddles of their horses were emptied.

It was all over in a short time, and that ended Young Wild West's adventure with the horse thieves, as far as his efforts went.

But not so with Arietta.

When she was cut loose from the villain everyone thought he was dead.

Charlie's bullet had wounded him mortally, but he still had strength enough to fight.

He opened his eyes suddenly, and then aimed his revolver straight at the heart of Young Wild West.

But with wonderful quickness, Arietta threw up his hand, and the bullet went through the empty air.

"That quick work of yours saved me, little girl," said the young deadshot, as he went back to the ranch house with her. "That was the greatest thing that happened in our deal with the horse thieves."

All hands agreed with this, and later when they were riding back to Dod's ranch, after it was all over, the talk was all about Arietta's quick work.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE CHOCTAW CHIEF; or, THE HIDDEN VALLEY AND THE LOST TRIBE," which will be the next number (365) of "Wild West Weekly."

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WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8, 1909.

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

A real Fiji man came into Washington to attend the international convention of the Seventh Day Adventists. He was armed with a club with which his former chief in the South Sea Islands used to beat the life out of American missionaries, and also with a big dish upon which the chief used to serve up meat from these missionaries' bones. Club and dish were brought along as mute evidences of the conversion of the Fiji chief, who now heads the Seventh Day Adventists' Society in the South Sea Isles.

There has just been placed upon the English market a rat trap that kills the rats instantaneously and painlessly. It is a box with several compartments, at the further end of each being a tiny electric light to attract the rats. A bit of cheese is placed in each compartment, so that when Mr. Rat, drawn by curiosity, comes to look at this strange, twinkling light, he will be drawn by his sense of smell to investigate further. The instant he touches the cheese he receives an electric shock that kills him on the spot. It has been found that a very slight current is sufficient to kill even the largest rat, and few get away alive after attempting to steal the cheese. The current is taken from an ordinary electric light fixture such as many houses are equipped with, or from a portable battery.

Attached to the National Soldiers' Home in Leavenworth, Kan., is a little square wooden building known as the soldiers' crank shop. From this shop comes a profusion of products more varied and unusual probably than any other place in the country puts out. All of the workmen are veterans. It is a novel sight to see a group of these hardened old warriors working away with saw and hammer for the pure love of making something. Here is a gray-haired workman constructing what he says will be shirt-waist boxes. Another is making a cane of unusual design. Here is one dabbling in paints at an artist's easel. That one is designing a yacht, this one is manufacturing jewelry from shells and copper wire. One little Irishman is forever making wooden legs to take the place of one he gave to his country. He has a leg for every occasion.

It is now known that the "sleeping sickness," which kills so many negroes of Equatorial Africa, is due to a microscopic parasite which lives in the blood, a parasite like the parasites of certain "malarial" fevers and, like them, introduced into the blood by means of the sting of an insect. The paludean fever is introduced by the mosquito; the infectious agent of

the sleeping sickness (trypanosome) is introduced by the tse-tse (a fly). Hitherto it has been supposed that Europeans possess immunity from the disease, but Dr. Forbes Tulloch, the British army doctor, who was of the party sent by the British Government to the Uganda to study "the sleeping sickness," has died in England of that disease. He contracted the disease while pursuing his study of it by inoculating himself in the hand while in the laboratory. The first symptom of the disease appeared four months before he died. This fact should be noted, because it proves that, in his case at least, the evolution of the disease was much more rapid than that same evolution is when the inoculation is made directly by the tse-tse in person.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"How I envy Flora—if I were only half as beautiful as she?"
"But you are." "You hateful man."

Constable—Come along; you've got to have a bath. Tramp—A bath! What, with water? Constable—Yes, of course. Tramp—Couldn't you manage it with one o' them vacuum cleaners?

"What do you s'pose it is dat is overcrowdin' de cities?" asked Meandering Mike. "I dunno," answered Plodding Pete, "unless it's dis habit farmers is gittin' into of advertisin' fur harvest hands."

"Edmund is the smartest child I ever saw," boasted the fond mother. "He is as keen as a razor." "Yes," spoke up grumpy grandpa, "and he reminds me of a razor." "In what way?" "He needs strapping."

She was lying on the couch in a state of prostration induced by a prolonged attack of toothache, and even the presence of her best young man failed to soothe her. "Oh! oh!" she wailed. "Why wasn't I born without teeth!" "Strikes me you were," remarked the young fellow, sweetly.

Mrs. Malaprop—Young Sharp will have to apologize before I'll speak to him again. Miss Interest—Did he insult you? Mrs. Malaprop—Did he? The last time I met him I told him that my uncle, Lord de Style, had locomotive attacksia, and he had the impudence to ask if he "whistled at crossings." He's an unsympathetic brute.

The Rector's Wife—I am sorry, Mr. Hodgkins, to find that you do not engage in any church work. Could not you do something to help us? Mr. Hodgkins—W'y, bless 'ee, ma'am, I bees a reg'lar church worker, I bees. Rector's Wife—Indeed! In what capacity, may I ask? Mr. Hodgkins—W'y, every Saturday night I goes up the steeple with the beer for the bell-ringers.

"How are ye? I'm really glad to see ye!" exclaimed an elderly Irishman, rushing up to a gentleman whom he believed to be an old acquaintance. A look of bewilderment spread slowly over the face of the gentleman whose walk he had interrupted, and then came the reply—"I've never seen you before in all my life." For a moment the impulsive Irishman eagerly scanned his features, and then, realizing that he had made a mistake, cried: "You're right. Be jabbers, it's neither of us!"

THE ROBBER'S DEFEAT

By HORACE APPLETON.

"But how are you to get so much money, Charley? It is but a few weeks since you told me that you had barely enough for us to go to housekeeping on when we were married. Has some relation left you a legacy, or have you made some lucky speculation which you have kept to yourself with the intention of conveying a happy surprise to me?"

"There, you have just hit it, Mary! I have made a lucky speculation, and intended it as a happy surprise to you. But it is not necessary to enter into particulars, for you would not understand it, and it is absolutely necessary that it be kept a profound secret to secure its successful issue. Of this you can rest assured; I am sure of a large amount of money, and we will be married on the day appointed, and hie on our bridal tour, but, remember that no one is to know of it until we are all ready for departure."

"I shall not forget; and despite the temptation to tell those who have been these many years 'looking down' on me, and, of late, on my choice of a husband, I shall show you that there is one woman at least who can keep a secret."

"Well, Mary, if I have no bad luck before the eventful day when I shall claim this dear hand, you can and shall triumph over these false friends. But I have a very urgent engagement for to-night, and must, much against my will, bid you farewell."

And with an affectionate leave-taking he departed.

He walked hurriedly, and evidently shunned observation, making a detour to avoid those streets which were much frequented, and, a few minutes later, knocked softly at the side door of a house.

After a few questions from someone within, he was admitted and warmly greeted by the two occupants of the room.

"Did you see Lewis, Gray?" asked one, who had the appearance of a sturdy farmer.

"Ay, that I did, Curtis," answered Gray; "but I only hinted to him of some project on foot, and he promised to meet us here to-night. You need not fear for him. He's all right. By the way, Newman, have you secured the revolvers?"

"Yes," answered the one addressed as Newman. "I have also secured a duplicate key, which may be of service to us, and I have the impression of the key to the carriage. Before the appointed time I shall have made a key that will answer our purpose."

"Hist!" exclaimed Curtis, at this juncture. "There's someone at the door."

A low tap was heard, and, on Curtis asking who was without, the name Lewis was given.

"I knew he would not fail us!" exclaimed Gray. "He's a brave, fearless fellow, and we need not hesitate to tell him all. Good for you, Frank," he continued, as the newcomer entered. "We have, as I told you, something on foot that will make us all independently rich; and, at my suggestion, all have agreed that you shall go in with us, and have an equal share. But Newman will explain the whole thing to you, and I know that you will be with us, heart and soul."

In a low, guarded tone, Newman now laid the following daring scheme before the astonished but apparently delighted Lewis.

"We knew that you were out of work, Frank, as Gray and I have been since we were discharged, and we do not propose to delve all our lives; and, knowing that you are a brave, faithful fellow, who will not be driven from a purpose by obstacles, however great, or danger, however imminent, we proposed to make you one of us. We intend, as Charley has expressed it, to make ourselves independently rich, and in one

night, too! Just think of that! I have discovered that a large amount of money is carried on the night runs, it being at no time small, and often an immense sum, in ready cash. After leaving a station the guard is generally occupied for from five to ten minutes in writing up his bills, money packages, etc. Now, we propose to get into the train at some station, enter the door with a duplicate key—the roar of the train will drown what noise we may make—surprise the guard and gag him, take from him the keys, open the safes, abstract the money packages, and, as the train slackens up on approaching a station, slip off, from either side, take to the fields, make an equal division of our spoils, and, between running and walking, reach home—and no one the wiser. Of course, we will so disguise our faces and voices that the guard can form no idea of our identity. It is a perfectly safe thing, and bound to win. What do you think of it, Frank?"

"Think! Why, I think it's just the jolliest thing out!" exclaimed Lewis, enthusiastically. "Of course it will win—there's nothing to prevent it! Its very daring will be our safety, and here's one that's in for it, hit or miss. But when do you propose to carry it out?"

"We have set next Friday night, without fail," replied Newman. "And now, as we cannot meet again without attracting attention, I'll fully explain our plans. I have here four revolvers—one for each. It is to be hoped that we will have no further use for them than to intimidate the guard, and any of the men who might happen to be in the carriage. In that we must take our chances. We will meet at eleven o'clock on Friday night, in the back of the goods house, each being careful that he is not observed proceeding in that direction. Gray and Lewis will wear these masks; Curtis and myself will blacken our faces. You should all wear clothes that can be destroyed after returning home.

"And now, boys, you can go out one at a time, while I remain to speak to our friend the landlord. Remember! eleven o'clock, Friday night. It then will rest with you whether you will be rich men in one night's work, or slave your lives out for a mere pittance."

In a few minutes Newman was left alone, and, after exchanging a few words with the landlord, took his departure.

On leaving the room and the company of conspirators, Lewis proceeded slowly homeward, evidently in a deep study; and, by the frequent shakings of his head and mutterings, it was plain that his mind was not altogether at ease.

Frank Lewis had been known as a wild, daring, harum-scarum young fellow, but against whom nothing bad had ever been known, and he was generally regarded as an honest young man.

His mischievous spirit had got him into innumerable scrapes with other young men, whose supply of wild oats seemed, as the years rolled swiftly by, to suffer no diminution; but never before had he been engaged in a dishonest undertaking.

Could he affiliate with this gang of desperate men, who would evidently not hesitate at murder to accomplish their ends?

For hours did he pace the narrow limits of his room and ponder over the question.

At first glance, the daring scheme had its attractions.

If successful, a life of ease might be his.

His longing for travel, and opportunities for accumulating knowledge might be gratified.

If he had had but a tithe of that wealth that he might now realize in one night, how he might have smoothed the last days of his mother, who had died in poverty!

His mother!

Ah, what tenderness welled into his heart, and softened the lines of his face at thought of her; that dear old mother, whose every thought of him had been a prayer for his safety and

guidance; who had, with dying breath, prayed him so to live that he might meet her in heaven.

That eventful night arrived. All final arrangements had been completed by Newman and Curtis, who were the active spirits of the party. Gray had taken leave of his betrothed bride, to whom he was to be united on the morrow, and Lewis looked firm and hopeful.

Silently and secretly, as became the desperate nature of the enterprise, they one by one fitted to the appointed rendezvous.

When all were present, Newman, in hurried whispers, gave the final instructions.

They were, by twos, to conceal themselves among the carriages lying on the line opposite the station, and next the one on which the express train would stop.

As the train started they were to slip out, and noiselessly mount the platform of the express, and when Newman unlocked the door and stepped in, they were to closely follow him.

Their revolvers were to be drawn and ready for instant use.

The guard was to be gagged and bound, and all haste made in opening the safes, that they might be in readiness to leave the train when it slackened up for the next stopping place.

They selected their places of concealment opposite where the express would stop, completed their disguises, and, with wildly throbbing hearts, but determined mien, awaited the coming of the train.

Could they but have seen what the future had in store for them, with what shudders of horror would they have fled from the spot, and been well content to "delve all their lives," or work at any employment, however hard and monotonous, if it but yielded them an honest livelihood.

Silently the minutes flitted by, and, at last, came the roar of the approaching train. Nearer and nearer it came, and, grasping firmly their revolvers, they steeled their hearts for the desperate enterprise, each mentally repeating the vow that he had taken, to succeed or die in the attempt.

With a rush the train drew up at the platform, and, an instant later, was speeding on its way.

But in that brief space of time the four desperate men climbed into the express, the key was softly inserted in the lock, the door was opened, and, following close after each other, they passed in.

The guard was discovered seated at his safe, facing from the door, and not dreaming of his danger.

As Newman tapped him on the shoulder he started up, to see himself confronted by four disguised men with loaded revolvers.

"The ropes—quick!" ordered Newman.

Curtis had just produced them, and stepped to the side of the guard, when, from a place of concealment, there suddenly appeared before them three men in the garb of officers of the law.

They instinctively turned, when they were confronted by an equal number of officers, whose leveled revolvers, glistening in the rays of the lamp, cut off all retreat.

They were clearly in a trap, and it only remained to fight to the death rather than suffer capture.

Then ensued one of the most desperate encounters ever witnessed.

High above the roar and rattle sounded the oaths and imprecations of the yelling, struggling men.

The revolvers had been knocked from the hands of the robbers before they had recovered their surprise at the first onslaught of the officers, and it was now a hand-to-hand encounter.

While this terrible scene was being enacted the train was

dashing along at full speed, and not one among the many passengers knew of the thrilling event then transpiring so close to them.

With the exception of Lewis, who seemed stunned and incapable of action, the robbers fought like demons.

But fate was against them, and, after many severe injuries given and received, they were overpowered, and, a few hours later, thrust into a dark and noisome cell of a gloomy prison.

The trial speedily came on, and then, for the first time, did they know by what means the authorities became cognizant of their plans.

The better nature of Lewis had asserted itself on the night that the plot was disclosed to him, and he had resolved to communicate the whole thing to the officers of the company.

This resolution he had carried into effect the following day.

During the trial the grief of the affianced wife of young Gray was heartrending, and the silent despair of the poor old mother of Newman was enough to move the feelings of the most obdurate nature.

They were sentenced for a long term, and one day, just a fortnight from the time of their arrest, they were conveyed to their gloomy prison; and when next the sun shed gleams of golden light over the earth, and the air resounded with the songs of birds and the hum of busy life, hope was shut out from the hearts of the men who had not heeded the teachings of the mothers who had loved them with deathless devotion, and who little thought when they caressed the baby faces, that, in time to come, they would look forth from prison bars, with the felon's brand forever stamped upon them.

LITTLE OLD NEW YORK

Just 283 years ago the whole of Manhattan Island was bought by stout Peter Minuet, the New York Governor of the West India Company, for a few trinkets valued at \$24. The Indians were glad to get so much from the Dutch for their hunting grounds.

Several years ago ground at the corner of Broadway and Wall street sold at \$24 for six square inches, when a lot measuring 30 by 39 feet brought \$700,000. So tremendous is the city's growth that one year's building plans represent a cost of \$130,000,000.

It is bewildering, overwhelming, this city of many tongues and many bloods, where a procession of 50,000 Roman Catholics recently marched through festal streets to their great cathedral—although it was once a crime punishable by death for a "Popish priest" to enter New York—and 800,000 Jews abide and flourish where once no Jews might vote.

There are nearly 10,000 policemen in the 3,200 miles of streets. Their pay alone amounts yearly to \$12,865,258. They made 244,822 arrests last year. To clean the streets they guard costs \$7,418,299 for a single year.

The parks of the amazing city cover fourteen square miles, including some of its choicest ground. It is said that they contain more than 2,500,000 trees, and are valued at \$1,500,000,000.

In other words, says Pearson's Magazine, the parks owned by New York contain more land than the big city of Rochester, N. Y., and could be sold for enough to pay the entire national debts of Holland, Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey.

Think of a city that has built 514 schoolhouses at a cost of about \$100,000,000, and that has more than 16,000 teachers and superintendents educating 651,000 children, the salaries alone being \$17,581,000 a year. The Department of Education will spend \$27,470,736 this year.

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